MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

A STUDY

OF

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

AND

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN

BY

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PREFACE.

MY attention was first directed to the subject of this book by Professor Dr. M. Heinze, of the University of Leipzig. He observed, in conversation, that though much was being written on the subject of the position of woman and on the movement in connection with her emancipation, comparatively little was being done by way of patient research in the annals of the past, to define the influences which have resulted in the social revolution of the present day. As a center for possible investigation of this kind, he mentioned Mary Wollstonecraft, her work and her times.

Following his suggestion, I took a survey of that which had been done in this particular direction, and found that Mr. C. Kegan Paul, Mary Wollstonecraft's biographer in recent times, had done valuable work in editing letters by her in connection with his work on *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries*, London, 1876. His work had formed the foundation for several biographical sketches. A full analytical and critical investigation of her views, as they had found expression in her life and works, with a survey of the influences which had moulded her thought, had yet to be given. This was the task which I made my own.

In the spring of 1894, the result of my research in form of an Inaugural Dissertation was presented to the

Faculty of the University of Bern in Switzerland, and was accepted by Professor Dr. Ludwig Stein of the Department of Philosophy, as a part of the usual examination for the Doctorate in Philosophy.

Meantime I had come to a realization that my subject was far from being exhausted. Professor Stein suggested further research in several directions. Mr. C. Kegan Paul kindly placed at my disposal several of the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, which it had previously been impossible for me to obtain. Dr. Richard Garnett of the British Museum aided me in my search for additional material during a short sojourn in London. During a summer vacation spent at Donaueschingen in the Black Forest in Germany, the Librarian of the Fürstlich Fürstenbergische Bibliothek, located there, spared no pains in helping me to find traces of Mary Wollstonecraft's influence upon her German contemporaries. At the University Libraries of Zürich and Vienna I gathered the material for my hypothesis concerning the literary indebtedness of Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel to Mary Wollstonecraft.

With this accumulation of additional material I returned to my home in India and began again, enlarging everywhere, adding much that was new.

Perhaps my work may be of some little service as a contribution toward historical research in a direction which has not received a large degree of attention thus far, though it has strong claims upon the student of to-day.

E. R. C.

ONGOLE, INDIA, 1896.

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A STUDY OF

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CHAPTER I.

HER LIFE.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT was born near London, April 27, 1759. Her parents were of Irish descent, and evidently passed the earlier years of their married life under favorable circumstances. They were both of good family and were in possession of some wealth. Mary's father had inherited £10,000 from his father, who owned a large factory in Spitalsfield. He engaged in farming and was an active man but not prosperous, and therefore sought to better his affairs by frequent change. A deeper fall in poverty marked each move made by him. When Mary was six years old the family moved to Barking in Essex, and three years later to Beverly in Yorkshire. There they remained for six years,

then moved to Wales for a year, and finally returned to London.

Mary was the second of six children. She enjoyed the advantages of an out-door life and seems to have been a strong and healthy child. Dolls had no attraction for her; she preferred to play and run about with her brothers. Her delight in nature was keen, and animals were friends whom she cherished. Her mother seems to have been a woman of firm character and good intentions, but in her decided preference for her eldest son, she was unjust to Mary, and gave her but a slight share of the affections which the warm-hearted child craved. In later life she admitted that in her treatment of Mary she had been too severe. Her father was a man of unstable character; trifles could rouse his temper, and neither his dogs nor his family were safe from the bursts of his violence. Even as a child, Mary could not conceal her indignation, and fearlessly interposed when her mother was the victim of his rage. Though the heavy pressure of sad circumstances rested upon her childhood, she was far from being crushed. Superiority of mind and heart seems early to have manifested itself. Her mother leaned upon her, and her father respected her.

Mary seems to have attended the common day school until she was fifteen years old. While the family lived at Beverly, she was a frequent visitor at the house of a Mr. Clare, a clergyman of literary taste, who seems to have lent her books and directed her reading. Through his wife she became ac-

quainted with Fanny Blood, a young woman somewhat older than herself, of noble character, who possessed the accomplishments of a young lady, and by her skill in music and drawing did much toward the support of her family. Mary's heart went out to Fanny at sight in a strong and enthusiastic friendship; and in several ways the beginning of this friendship may be termed a crisis in her young life. Thus far Mary seems to have read simply to quench her thirst for knowledge. Fanny's studies had been carried on more systematically. But Mary's ambition to excel in intellectual pursuits was now fully roused, and the latent spirit of independence within her asserted itself in the determination to make her way in life by her own exertions.

This two-fold ambition however met with little sympathy in Mary's home. Her plans for study were left unheeded, and a position that was offered her, she declined, persuaded by the earnest entreaties of her mother. Three years thus passed by and the financial difficulties of the family grew more oppressive. Mary finally decided to accept the position of companion to a Mrs. Dawson in Bath. She was now nineteen years old. Mrs. Dawson's temper made her new office a difficult one, which few of her predecessors had been able to fill for any length of time. Mary stayed for two years.

The occasion of her return home was a lingering illness of her mother, who longed for the presence of her eldest daughter and refused to accept the slightest service from anyone else.

She died, and Mary's father soon married again. His house ceased to offer a suitable home for his daughters.

Mary now went to live with her friend Fanny for a time, helped her mother, who took in needle-work, and under Fanny's guidance pursued her studies. Fanny's home life was rendered unhappy by causes similar to those which had rested like a blight on Mary's life. Family life presented itself to her in its darkest aspects. A year of work and study had passed, when Mary's sister Eliza, who had married a Mr. Bishop, possibly in order to escape the ills connected with life in her father's house, called for Mary's presence. Her marriage was a most unhappy one. Eliza was very young, hasty tempered and apt to exaggerate trifles. Mr. Bishop was a man of violent temper. Eliza's reason had well-nigh given way under her trials. This was the first occasion on which any of the great social questions presented itself to Mary; and the motives that prompted her actions in her sister's behalf, were decisive in her own affairs in later years. She considered her sister's marriage as practically dissolved by reason of the brutality of her husband. She arranged a sudden and secret flight, and after she had remained in hiding with her sister for a time, a legal separation was effected.

Thus far Mary had largely devoted herself to her family, strong to help in trouble, a gentle nurse in sickness. She now saw that she must engage in some work, in which Eliza and her sister Everina also could find a livelihood, and in which Fanny

could join. Mary was now twenty-four years old. Her talents had asserted themselves, and notwithstanding her meagre educational advantages, she had the attainments necessary to open a school. This was her first public venture.

The school which the sisters and Fanny Blood opened at Newington Green in 1783 seemed for a time to succeed. They soon had twenty day pupils and a few boarders. But discordant notes marred the harmony which they had hoped would make their work a pleasure. The heavier share of the burdens fell upon Mary, yet it was not without some jealousy that her sisters saw her the recipient of a larger degree of respect and admiration than they themselves received. Fanny, to whom Mary in earlier days looked up as a friend of larger attainments than she herself possessed, now leaned upon Mary for support. Their relations were reversed. Fanny's life was being worn out with the ills of poverty, and when she married Mr. Hugh Skeys and went with him to Lisbon, her health was already undermined. He had feared the displeasure of his friends, and had delayed his marriage until it was too late. Mary's heart clung to Fanny; and, when after a time, Fanny begged for her presence, she refused to listen to the voice of friends, who advised her not to go, she left the school in charge of her sisters, and arrived in Lisbon but just in time to nurse her friend during her last days. Fanny died, and Mary returned to England almost heart-broken; for she loved Fanny with all the devotion of her nature. At Newing-

ton she found fresh troubles awaiting her. Her sisters had not been equal to the responsibility resting upon them. The pupils had scattered, and means with which to meet debts incurred for house-rent were not forthcoming. There was nothing left to do but to close the school.

The sad circumstances of Mary's early life now seemed to reach their climax. She wrote in later years: "I have never had either father or brother." Her eldest brother was now an Attorney in London and might have helped his family, but he was a selfish man, and Everina, who had sought a home with him, found the shelter grudgingly given. Her father's poverty was growing more distressing. Far from having a home to offer his children, he had begun to look to them for support. Fanny's parents too were in trouble, and her brother George, whom Mary loved as an own brother, was without a situation. Poverty, sorrow and trouble surrounded Mary on every hand. A note of deep despondency vibrates through her letters of this period. Life with her had been one hard struggle. Even childhood's joys had fled before the harshness which she experienced at the hands of those who should have been her best friends. Her unwearying efforts to obtain an education had been met by almost insurmountable difficulties, and now her first attempt to carve for herself an independent and useful place in life had proved a failure. Above all, in the death of her friend Fanny, she had lost the kindliest ray of sunshine that had thus far smiled upon her path.

Two prominent men rendered Mary service at this time, that was destined to influence the further development of her career; and it is significant of the influences that surrounded her at that time, that both were clergymen. One, the Rev. J. Hewlett, introduced her to Mr. Johnson, the publisher in St. Paul's Churchyard, to whom she offered her first literary venture, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters.* Ten guineas this effort brought her, and with characteristic unselfishness, she put the money into the hands of Fanny's parents, that they might carry out their desire of going to Ireland and settling in Dublin. The other friend, who helped Mary at this juncture, was Dr. Richard Price, the famous Dissenting preacher. Through his recommendation Mr. Prior, Assistant Master at Eton, obtained for her a situation as governess in the family of Lord Kingsborough in Ireland. In the autumn of 1787, after a short stay in Eton, with Mr. and Mrs. Prior, she sailed with these friends to Ireland.

Her new position as governess was not one in which Mary could long rest satisfied. Her craving for independence could not be silenced. She soon became attached to her pupils, but the tone of society at the castle was far from congenial. In her hours of leisure she wrote a story, *Mary, a Fiction*, a record of her friendship with Fanny Blood. Mr. Johnson, the publisher, whose interest in her had been roused before she went to Ireland, saw in this second literary attempt fresh indication of her talent. He advised her to come to London and

promised her constant literary work, to consist chiefly in translating from the French. Mary gladly entered upon these plans. Lady Kingsborough had cause to be jealous of the hold which Mary had on the affections of her pupils. The regret which the eldest of them showed when left by Mary for a short time, was the pretext for her dismissal. She left behind her scenes of gaiety at Dublin, Bristol, Hotwells and Bath, where she had gone with the family of her employer. Most of the women with whom she came in contact were frivolous, most of the men were coarse. The insight which she gained into the ways of those favored by rank and fortune was not without its moulding influence upon her views in the years that followed.

Under the direction of her publisher, Mary, during the following five years, 1787—1792, developed an unusual activity. Besides attending to the daily recurring smaller tasks, incidental to her position, she increased her knowledge of modern languages and made translations of several books, popular at that time. A few books for children issued from her pen. Contributions to the *Analytical Review*, lately started by Mr. Johnson, also formed part of her activity. By reason of her exertions she was now able to help her family. Her father in his poverty had come to look to her for support. Everina and Eliza, who continued as governesses, frequently made Mary's scantily furnished rooms their home. They and Mary's two younger brothers were offered educational advantages through her

generosity. Not less than £200, as Mr. Johnson says, did she expend on her brothers and sisters during those years.

Through her relations to her publisher, Mary was introduced to men and women who were congenial. The literary society which frequented the house of Mr. Johnson, where Mary was always welcome, was composed of men of liberal views, in favor of reform; who gathered to discuss the great questions of those stirring times and to watch eagerly the developments of the Revolution in France. This social intercourse could not but stimulate Mary's mental activity. Yet she worked on, comparatively unnoticed, until in 1790, Edmund Burke published his famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The first of the numerous replies from the liberal party came from the pen of Mary Wollstonecraft. Written with an eloquence somewhat too heedless, her reply nevertheless called forth applause, for it breathed throughout the spirit of liberty. Concerning Mary's attitude toward the questions of her times, there could not now be any doubt. She belonged to the Revolutionists, and demanded reform, political and social. Soon after this, her views again found expression in her best-known work, the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*.

Mary was now thirty-three years of age. Her work had been crowned with unusual success. Through her last-named book she had become famous not only in England but also in Germany and France. In the literary circles of London she was now a distinguished personage. She took

the brevet rank of *Mrs.* Wollstonecraft. In appearance she was dignified and attractive. Regular features and large expressive eyes were surrounded by masses of brownish auburn hair. There is thus far no trace of a romance in Mary's life. A report, which was later discussed in Mary's biography as well as in Fuseli's, that Mary's friendship with that distinguished artist, whose wife was also her friend, had become intensified to a degree that made the relations of a merely friendly nature equivalent to a torment to her, is found by Mr. C. Kegan Paul, who has had opportunity to weigh the evidence for and against, to be without foundation. Whether this circumstance, as Godwin says, decided her to seek a change by a short sojourn in France, or whether it was to study on the spot the nature of the events that perplexed the minds of friends and foes alike of the Revolution is uncertain ; with regard however to her private affairs her journey was destined to usher her into sad complications.

Mary went to Paris toward the end of the year 1792. As yet there was peace between France and England. Mary had very good introductions. At the house of a friend she met an American, Captain Gilbert Imlay, who had, in the service of the United States, gained some slight reputation as an author. He wrote a monograph entitled, *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*, which in its day went through many editions. To him Mary gave her whole heart, and with it an unbounded confidence. Meantime the relations between England and France had

become strained to such an extent, that all communication between the two countries had ceased. Mary's position, as a British subject, was full of danger; Imlay was safe, since the Americans were considered friends and allies by the Revolutionists. Mary's nationality had to be concealed, and a legal marriage with Imlay was therefore out of the question; moreover it was doubtful whether such would have been valid in England. She was regarded in the circle of their acquaintances as Imlay's wife, and the American consul gave her a certificate to that effect.

In the autumn of 1793 Imlay was called to Havre on business, and after a few months Mary followed him. In the spring of the following year Mary gave birth to a daughter, named Fanny in memory of the dear friend of her youth. Until September she enjoyed the sunshine of happiness and then Imlay went to London and this separation was the beginning of Imlay's desertion. His letters grew cool in tone and when she followed him to London, in April 1795, his attentions were strained, and his interest in her and her child but slight. After a few weeks he asked Mary to undertake a journey to Norway, where he had engaged in business ventures, and gave her a legal document, in which he speaks of her as "Mary Imlay, my best friend and wife," giving her plenary powers to act for him. She travelled in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Her health, worn out by cruel uncertainty, was recuperated, but mentally she was nigh unto despair. When after an absence of four

months she returned to England with her little daughter, she found that her most harrassing fears were not without foundation. Driven to despair by the discovery that an unworthy intrigue was being carried on under her own roof, she sought death in the waters of the Thames. Some passing boatmen rescued her when life was almost extinct. Their kindness seemed but cruelty; for she still could not bear the thought of a permanent separation from Imlay. During the five months that followed, he frequently offered her pecuniary assistance, which she declined. "I never wanted but your heart—that gone, you have nothing more to give."[1] With regard to Fanny's maintenance, she wrote: "You must do as you please with respect to the child."[2] Imlay gave a bond for a sum to be settled on his child; but neither interest nor principal was ever paid. In March 1796, Mary saw that all hope of reconciliation was futile. Imlay now vanished completely from her life.

As before her journey to France, she lived again in London, and by the aid of Mr. Johnson, always the most helpful of her friends, she again supported herself by her pen. She had her daughter Fanny with her, and at Imlay's request they both bore his name. Otherwise there was no change. During her sojourn in France she had written the first volume of *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, and the effect it has produced in Europe*, which

[1] Letters to Imlay, p. 188. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

was now published. This would have been a valuable work, if she could have completed it in three or four additional volumes as she intended. The letters which she had written to Imlay during her travel in northern countries, she divested of personal matters, and published them on account of their descriptive merit, as *Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark.*

Mary was sad and depressed in spirit, but gradually she found pleasure in frequenting, as before her journey to France, the literary society of London. William Godwin was one of those with whom she renewed her acquaintance. Her *Letters from Sweden* had charmed him, for he saw in them every indication of matured literary talent and a spirit grown gentle and calm with suffering. Her late experiences had roused his sympathy. The friendship which they now conceived for each other soon ripened into love.

William Godwin was at this time forty years old, and stood at the height of his literary success. His *Political Justice* represented as bold a stride in a new direction as did Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Women.* He was the most radical of the liberal party in England, and as their most prominent thinker was of very pronounced influence in his day. One of the radical consequences of his philosophy was that "marriage is law, and the worst of all laws." It was not a light matter with him to decide to act contrary to his own theories. Mary had just passed through a sad experience to

which some degree of publicity had been given. She had no wish to encounter again the ordeal of public comment. Moreover, the experiences of her life had brought her in vivid contact with all the distressing aspects of marriage as a civic institution. She hesitated to take any decisive step. They did not at once declare their attachment to the world. The ceremony took place at St. Pancras Church, March 26th, 1797.

It was a union of two, who may be counted among the most remarkable people of their times. A rare blending of mental endowments was to be expected. Mary was at work on a novel, *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman*, upon which she bestowed a degree of painstaking labor unusual with her. But the season of calm in her stormy life was of short duration. She gave birth to a daughter, Mary, August 30th, 1797, and after lingering between life and death for ten days, the best physicians in London doing their utmost to save her, she died September 10th, 1797.

A year later, Godwin published his *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin.* He hoped by a clear statement of the principles, which had actuated her in the arrangements of her life, to call forth a more kindly attitude towards her memory. But he was not the one to do her this service. Too many of his own radical views found their way into the book; nor did he succeed in representing Mary's life in a way that would lessen the asperity with which her character was denounced. He also published the *Posthumous Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* in

four volumes, which again excited much adverse criticism. The volumes contained chiefly the novel *Maria ; or, the Wrongs of Woman*, which, owing to the author's death remained incomplete, and also the personal part of her letters to Imlay, which Mary had retained, when she published the *Letters from Sweden.*

Two years after his wife's death, Godwin published a work of fiction, *St. Leon*, in which he paid an indirect tribute of a high order to Mary Wollstonecraft. In Marguerite, one of the most charming female characters in the fiction of that day, the reader recognizes her leading traits. The story is remarkable for the exalted place which the joys of family life afford when centered in a woman like Marguerite. The married life of St. Leon with Marguerite is an idealized description of the enjoyment which Godwin drew from the companionship of his wife during the short season of their united lives.

The writings of Mary Wollstonecraft continued to be read; her fame as one of the most gifted authors of her time was spread abroad. Her works were read in Germany and France in translations, and in America also her name seems to have been well known; for Aaron Burr during his residence in Europe writes to his daughter Theodosia: "I have seen the two daughters of Mary Wollstonecraft."[1] The facts of her late life, however, as they had been brought before the public were viewed

[1] The Private Journal of Aaron Burr, during his residence of four years in Europe. Edited by Matthew L. Davis, New York, 1838, Vol. I, p. 98.

with little favour and scant justice. It pleased critics to look upon them, not as due to unfortunate circumstances, but as wilful transgressions against the laws of society. Caustic remarks were made and passed on. But while newspapers after a time ceased to make comments, sketches of her life and works found their way into histories of English literature, and into books of reference, great and small. The same unjust estimate of her character is found in most of these. An anonymous defender in 1803 claimed that it was "want of attentive enquiry, which has induced the public to pass a general vote of censure upon an unfortunate woman, who, in many instances might have advanced a claim to their warmest approbation." [1] A tone however prevails in this Defence, that is not without its hidden drop of poison.

Once more, in 1844, an edition of the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published, because, as is said in the Preface, "it is undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary productions of the time at which it appeared," and also "because it is characterized by an originality, a boldness, a love of truth and a generous earnestness of purpose, which show with what an ardent desire to accomplish a great and noble purpose the fair and gifted author entered upon her hazardous undertaking." [2] After

[1] A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin; in a series of letters to a Lady, London, 1803.

[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Women; 3rd Edition, revised and re-edited, London, William Strange, 1844.

this there is silence, and during the several decades that followed, the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft was more and more neglected, and she well-nigh forgotten; while the movement to which she had given perhaps the first conscious expression, was taking its first timid steps toward general recognition.

Meantime Mary's two daughters passed their childhood's days in the house of Godwin and grew up into womanhood. Fanny took the name of Miss Godwin. Mary, beautiful and gifted, was wont to take her books to the lonely St. Pancras cemetery to read in the shade of the willow-tree by the side of her mother's grave, and thus to satisfy her thirst for knowledge undisturbed by an unloved step-mother. Here the poet Shelley, who during that period of his life looked upon Godwin as his tutor and mentor, found Mary, then sixteen years old, over her books, and told her the story of his life and of his love for her, "though legally bound, he held himself morally free to offer himself to her if she would be his."[1] She, a mere child, imbued with her father's philosophy and overcome by a profound admiration for the poetical genius of Shelley, "conceived that she wronged by her action no one but herself, and she did not hesitate."[2] Harriet, the wife of Shelley, deserted by her husband, supplanted by Mary, ere long found herself involved in serious trouble; death seemed preferable to life; she sought a watery grave. There

[1] Mrs. Julian Marshall: The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Vol. I, p. 64.

[2] *Ibid.*, page 65.

was intense mental activity in the house of Godwin; there was genius and noble thought. But wrong was done in the enunciation of principles dangerous to the welfare of society; wrong was done by reducing these principles to action. Mary Shelley, not only as the wife of the poet, but also through the display of her own genius won for herself a place in English literature.

Fanny, the gentle girl, full of thoughtful, loving care for those about her, has a place in the biographies of four remarkable people. Her winsome baby ways are exquisitely described in her mother's letters. In Godwin's biography she takes the place of his eldest daughter, helpful and sympathetic in his financial troubles. As Mr. C. Kegan Paul says, Fanny, after her mother, is the most attractive character met with in the whole enormous mass of Godwin's MSS. Mary's maturer nature expanded under Shelley's influence, not under Godwin's. Fanny had a warm place in Shelley's affections. In his biography as well as in Mary's, she is the gentle adviser, who seeks to make peace, when Godwin refused to know his daughter Mary, after she had left his house with Shelley; and takes upon herself the mediatorship between the two households. Gentle words issue from the pens of the biographers, when they come to the place where Fanny "withdrew from life, because in her weakness and her melancholy she looked upon herself as a sad encumbrance to the world; she withdrew, not in violence or passion, but stealing away with hopeless eye and rapid step to darkness, silence

and oblivion."[1] Godwin's mind was filled with anxious attempts to extricate himself from his financial embarrassments; Mrs. Godwin, never of gentle temper, had perhaps reminded the poor girl that she was a burden to the household. Moreover the extreme depression to which her mother had been subject, seized hold of Fanny from time to time. She was twenty-two years old when she travelled to Swansea, stopped for the night at the Mackworth Arms Inn, and ended her life by a dose of laudanum. Godwin and Shelley hastened to Swansea and returned overwhelmed with grief. Even Godwin's habitual equanimity was shaken; for he had loved this gentle girl, who had found her way to his affections during the brief period, when both he and she found a rare warmth of affection in the presence of Mary Wollstonecraft.

In the year 1817 Shelley wrote his epic poem "The Revolt of Islam." The Dedication is to Mary and contains a verse which refers to the mother, whose memory Mary cherished with a deep and peculiar affection:

> "They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
> Of glorious parents thou aspiring child:
> I wonder not—for One then left this earth
> Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
> Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
> Of its departing glory; still her fame
> Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
> Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
> The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name."

[1] Edward Dowden, LL.D.: The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. II, p. 50.

Laon, the hero of this poem, was one who suffered and died because his entreaties to break the fetters of despotism had incited men to rebellion and revolt. And Cythna was but his other self. Hers is a lofty character, of a type perhaps unknown before the dawn of the nineteenth century; a stranger in fiction until Shelley's fiery spirit gave her birth. Cythna mourns with Laon the servitude in which one-half of mankind languish, "Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves." The light of exultation breaking from her eyes, Cythna assumes the task of proclaiming freedom and equality between man and woman.

> "The wild-eyed women throng around her path
> From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
> Of meaner thralls, from the oppressors' wrath,
> Or the caresses of his sated lust,
> They congregate. . . . .
> Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
> To women, outraged and polluted long;"

Mary, the loved companion of Shelley's aspirations, had a cast of genius different from that which belongs to the reformer; but the mother, whose life was hushed when hers began, presented in real life a type of womanhood, which found its idealized image in Cythna.

The years passed by, Godwin, after a long life of literary toil, had died at the ripe age of eighty. Shelley had found an early, sadly lamented death in the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. Mary Shelley, the freshness of her powers spent during the eight years of active life with Shelley, had passed

her twenty-nine years of lonely widowhood in literary labour and thought. Her grave was in Bournemouth Churchyard, the burial-place nearest the home of her only surviving child, Sir Percy Shelley, who transferred the remains of his grand-parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft to the same spot, when the old St. Pancras cemetery was invaded by busy London life. In the house of Sir Percy Shelley, near by, was kept the silver urn containing the ashes of his father. Here too the picture of Mary Wollstonecraft, painted by Opie at the request of Godwin, during her short married life with him, had its place. As Mr. Kegan Paul says, its tender, wistful, childlike, pathetic beauty, with a look of pleading against the hardness of the world, he knows in one only other face, that of Beatrice Cenci.

Not until eighty years had passed; since the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* were steps taken to set her right in the eyes of the world. Sir Percy Shelley placed the whole of the papers in his possession relating to his grandfather, William Godwin, at the disposal of Mr. C. Kegan Paul, the well-known publisher in London, in order that he might compile a Life of the philosopher. Among these papers were found letters written by Mary Wollstonecraft during the period of ten years that preceded the publication of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* concerning which so little was known. They are addressed to members of her family and to intimate friends and reveal a woman, who suffered

much, who courageously met the difficulties that confronted her and others, whose heart ever craved for love, and whose consolation was found in a warm and tender allegiance to the beliefs of the Christian religion.

Mr. C. Kegan Paul undertook to vindicate the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft, and what he had commenced in his Life of Godwin, largely by letting her speak herself through her letters, he carried through three years later. He published again the personal part of those *Letters to Imlay* and in the full Prefatory Memoir he accomplished, what was attempted with so slight a degree of success many years before by Godwin. Mary Wollstonecraft found her defender in him. He protests against the obloquy and scorn which have been heaped upon her character. As for the views, for which she fought, he well says: "Her opinions have become in many particulars the commonplaces of our own day, while she who was first to proclaim what is now held innocently, was forgotten or assailed."

Mr. Paul's effort had its immediate effect; for the eyes of the literary world could no longer ignore the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft. The *New Quarterly Review* soon after brought out an essay, by Mathilde Blind, on Mary Wollstonecraft, which did her full justice. A similar essay was published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1889, by Helen Zimmern. And in the *Eminent Women Series* a full biographical sketch of Mary Wollstonecraft was written by Elizabeth Robins Pennell, in which her

memory is fully vindicated. So lively an interest was awakened, that several new editions of the *Vindications of the Rights of Woman* were called for.

The story of the life of Mary Wollstonecraft is pathetic throughout, full of wrong inflicted, of suffering endured. Much as she was maligned, not even the severest of her critics has been able to bring forward a charge against her, that she neglected her parents, her brothers and sisters; that she was faithless in her relations to any man or woman. The vindicator of the rights of her sex is not known to have betrayed a woman during the whole course of her sad, eventful life. She disdained to tamper with the affections of any man.

The charge which must ever stand unanswerably against her memory, is that she wronged herself in the excess of trustfulness bestowed upon Imlay, in her reluctance to enter upon her marriage relation with Godwin in the lawful form. After this charge has been admitted, it behoves the student of history to enquire, whether there was aught in her message to humanity that was good, true and right.

Resentment was felt a century ago against that in her life, which seemed an application of some of the most dangerous principles that found expression in the French Revolution. A calmer judgment to-day sifts good from evil; and that innate sense of justice in the human race, that stands ready to vindicate the memory of its benefactors has asserted itself in behalf of Mary Wollstonecraft.

CHAPTER II.

Her Literary Work.

THE works of Mary Wollstonecraft display unusual versatility of mental powers. She was able to turn her mind to new tasks in a way that made her eminent in several directions. She may be classed among pedagogical writers, but she also wrote on historical subjects and took part in discussions in political principles. She wrote fiction, and her letters descriptive of experiences in travel, and letters personal, take a high rank even to this day, among productions of that kind. And more than all this, her genius furnished, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, the motive power, derived from originality of conception, which helped to carry forward an historic movement.

Her intellectual endowments then, were of a wide scope. She was a born educator. Her practical skill in education was even superior to her speculations upon that subject,"[1] is the tribute

[1] The Gentleman's Magazine, 1797. Among "Obituaries of Remarkable Persons."

paid her by one of her contemporaries. Godwin says of her: "No person was ever better formed for the business of education; if it be not a sort of absurdity to speak of a person as formed for an inferior object, who is in possession of talents, in the fullest degree adequate to something on a more important and comprehensive scale." "I have heard her say," he continues, "that she never was concerned in the education of one child, who was not personally attached to her, and earnestly concerned not to incur her displeasure. Another eminent advantage she possessed in the business of education, was that she was little troubled with scepticism and uncertainty. She saw, as it were by intuition, the path which her mind determined to pursue, and had a firm confidence in her own power to effect what she desired."[1] She wrote but little on strictly educational matter, but she brought to bear upon her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* all the skill, practical and theoretical, which she possessed, as an educator. It is, as the *Analytical Review* said, "in reality an elaborate treatise on female education."[2] The educator was here merged in the reformer.

The leading traits of the reformer were hers. Courage and strength of conviction marked her attitude; nor did she hesitate to place implicit trust in her own opinions, however much at variance

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 43.

[2] The Analytical Review, March 1792.

they might have been with those held by the great majority. The enthusiasm which inspires belief in success, however insurmountable the obstacles might seem, was hers and carried her forward.

Her love for humanity was on a grand scale and gave her a keen insight into the causes that lay at the root of social evils, lent her a firm hand to open out these causes and lay them bare, and inspired her with a burning desire to see the wrongs of humanity set right, and justice meted out to that part of the human race, whose rights had thus far been largely overlooked.

Blended with the eminently practical tendency of the reformer, displayed in the measures which she advocated, was the speculative reasoning of the philosopher. She possessed the high mental power of seeing truth intuitively; and at the same time aimed at accurate expression of terms and thus sought a rational basis for ideas, which she had attained by way of intuitive perception. The great questions, that have engaged thinkers in all ages, concerning the laws of the universe and their invisible law-giver; concerning the destiny of man and the ultimate triumph of right over wrong, had early confronted her, and she had come to her own conclusions regarding them. This speculative reasoning forms the background of her practical applications.

This threefold gift: The practical skill of the educator, the zeal of the reformer, and the thoughtfulness of the philosopher, supported as it was by an unusual command of language, made her a woman

"well known throughout Europe by her literary works."[1]

Mary Wollstonecraft began her public career as a teacher, and as a consequence her first literary efforts were put forth in the direction of education. Her first production[2] did not enjoy great success. It is full of precepts, full of counsel, and is written in a sombre tone, with little of the joyousness of life and youth vibrating in it. The burdens of her life seemed to her insupportably heavy at the time, and the heaviness of spirit is apparent in her writing. Yet the germs of later, riper thought are there.

Her second attempt as a writer of educational books was in a happier vein, and met with far greater success. In *Original Stories from Real Life*[3] she abandoned the somewhat stilted form of precept, and in the form of stories, taught the children to see the deeper meanings in the daily occurrences of their lives.

A prominent educator in Germany, C. S. Salzmann, had adopted a similar method. His book accidentally fell into Mary Wollstonecraft's hands while she was learning German, and as an exercise in language, she began to translate it. She was soon so pleased to find, as she says in the preface,

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[1] The Gentleman's Magazine, 1797.

[2] Thoughts on the Education of Daughters with Reflections on Female Conduct in the more important Duties of Life. London, 1787.

[3] Original Stories from Real Life. London, 1788, 1791, 1796 (with illustrations designed and engraved by W. Blake). London, 1807, 1820, 1835. Dublin, 1799.

that the writer coincided with her in opinion respecting the method, which ought to be pursued to form the heart and temper of children, that she made her translation[1] an English book, by avoiding the introduction of German customs and local opinions, thus giving it the spirit of an original. "All the pictures," she says, "are drawn from real life, and that I highly approve of this method, my having written a book on the same plan, (Entitled *Original Stories from Real Life*) is the strongest proof." It is interesting, as an indication of the later development of her thought, that in her own book she inserted a little tale to lead children to consider the Indians as their brothers, "because the omission of this subject appeared to be a chasm in a well-digested system."

Both these books, her own *Original Stories from Real Life* and her rendering of Salzmann's *Moralisches Elementarbuch* were much read in their day.

Mary Wollstonecraft's other translations did not enjoy so great a degree of popularity. She translated Necker's *Opinions Religieuses*[2] and Lavater's *Physiognomy* from the French. A translation from the Dutch of *Young Grandison* was put into her hands, which she almost re-wrote. She also compiled a *French Reader*, introducing some original

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[1] C. S. Salzmann: Elements of Morality. Translated by Mary Wollstonecraft. London, 1790, 2 vols.; 1792, 3 vols.; 1793, 2 vols.; Baltimore, U. S. A., 1811; Edinburgh, 1821.

[2] Jacques Necker: Of the Importance of Religious Opinions. Translated by Mary Wollstonecraft, London, 1788; Philadelphia, 1791.

pieces, and adding a preface. The nature of this work offered little opportunity for display of genius; on the contrary, perhaps her talent was suppressed. Yet it increased no doubt that readiness of expression, that is so conspicuous in the two productions, which followed each other closely toward the end of the period of her work in Mr. Johnson's employ.

Had her literary activity ceased here, she might rightly have been classed among the pedagogical writers of her time. But she now entered into a new sphere of activity. The revolutionary element, that had thus far lain dormant, now burst forth. While she had heretofore, as an educator, watched the development of the individual, she now turned her attention to the evolution of the human race. In her *Rights of Man*[1] she expressed her general views, in her *Rights of Woman*[2]

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, in a letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke. London, 1790. Two Editions in the same year.

[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, with Strictures on Political and Moral subjects. London, 1792. Two editions. Boston, U. S. A., Thomas and Andrews, 1792.

Défense des droits des femmes, suivie de quelques considerations sur des sujets politique et moreaux. 2 parties, 8°, Paris, Buisson, 1792. Also Lyon, Bruyset frères, 1792.

Rettung der Rechte des Weibes. Schnepfenthal bei Gotha, 1793, Mit Vorwort und Anmerkungen von Christian Gotthilf Salzmann, 2 Bände.

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. London, William Strange, 1844. This edition was revised and re-edited.

Another edition: London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1891. With an Introduction by Mrs. Henry Fawcett.

Another edition: London, Walter Scott, 1892. With an Introduction by Elizabeth R. Pennell.

which followed soon after, she directed her full attention to woman as constituting that part of the human race, which had not been allowed to partake to the full extent in the true progress of civilization; and as the result had forfeited its own best interest; and at the same time had endangered the advancement of the whole. This was a task suited to the courage and zeal of the reformer. She attacked the social structure, wrought by the laborious evolution of many centuries, and made firm by the customs and usages of Church and State. It was an age when the French Revolution marked a crisis in history, and thinking minds were busy with the problem of how to save ancient institutions by expanding them in order to give room to a new principle, that found expression in the demand for the rights of men. Mary Wollstonecraft stood in the very midst of the currents of thought that made her time remarkable. In her *Rights of Man* she took opportunity to range herself against conservatism, and to express herself in favor of all that was, liberal and progressive. She showed her grasp upon the discussion of the rights of man in every aspect. The application of the same reasoning to the rights of women was a novel undertaking and was carried through with boldness and courage.

Her volume[1] on the French Revolution is the next literary production, and seems a natural step from the discussion of the abstract principles in-

[1] An Historical and oral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the effect it has produced in Europe. Vol. I, London, 1794.

volved in that catastrophe to an historical survey of their embodiment in facts and events. It is a philosophical book. The author never loses sight of the causes that underlie events; she never forgets the principles which she believed must ultimately be crowned with victory. It is a matter of regret that she did not complete her work in four or five volumes. She does not bring the record further than to the time of the King's removal to Paris. The events, which she herself witnessed—the passage of Louis XVI. to his trial and later to his death, and the intense excitement attendant upon these extreme measures—were not depicted by her pen, except in short letters. She was accurate in her descriptions and preserved a good degree of calmness amid the feverish throbbing of national excitement. The writings of foreigners, who were at that time in Paris, are to-day a valuable source of information to the student of history. Mary Wollstonecraft's work would have ranked with the best of these, had she carried it farther.

Written under different circumstances, in a mood melancholy but receptive, her next book[1] reveals a new aspect of her literary talent. Away

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[1] Letters written during a short residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. London, 1796.

Another edition in Wilmington, Del., U. S. A., 1796.

A German translation appeared in Hamburg. Date uncertain.

Extractos das cartas de Mary Wollstonecraft relativas á Suecia, Noruega e Dinamarca, e huma breve noticia de sua vida, offerecidos . . . . por H. X. Baeta. Lisboa, 1806.

New English edition, Cassell, 1889.

Natur-und Sittengemälde aus Schweden. Leipzig, 1893.

from scenes of strife and bloodshed, she wanders in Northern countries, in paths far removed from the beaten track of the ordinary traveller. She looks upon the scenes that unfold before her through the medium of unusual powers of perception of the beautiful in nature; the wealth of her imagination gives rise to charming interludes; and her observations on man and the various conditions in which she finds him, are worthy of one who has made the progress of humanity her life's study. It is a thoroughly charming book. Much appreciated in its time, it has claim upon the student of to-day, who would acquaint himself with the conditions existing in Norway and Sweden a century ago. Its recent editions show that this claim is respected.

This was the last book published during her lifetime. While in the midst of her next task, her pen was laid aside, and her mental activities were hushed in death. Godwin published *The Wrongs of Woman: or Maria. A Fragment*[1] in its unfinished condition, as she left it. It fills Volumes I and II of her *Posthumous Works.*[2]

With mingled feelings the reader of to-day follows her in this last effort to take the part of the oppressed. *The Wrongs of Woman* is a novel written with a purpose. The author does not use argument this time, but draws pictures of degra-

[1] French Translation: Maria, ou le malheur d'être femme. Ouvrage posthume invité de l'anglais, par B. Duros, Paris, 1798.

[2] Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Four volumes. London, 1798.

dation and horrors so vivid, that he who has admired her idealism can scarcely believe that realism, so repulsive, could issue from the same pen. Yet it was a portrayal of the wrongs which she had known women to endure. Twice in the course of her literary career Mary Wollstonecraft attempted in works of fiction to describe the feelings and passions that govern human beings; and both times with the purpose of showing how the brutal force of men may triumph over the helpless resistance of women, whom circumstances have placed in their power. In *Mary, a Fiction*,[1] the heroine is bound for life to a man, whose approach fills her with horror. In *The Wrongs of Woman* this theme is carried farther. The author's main object, as she says in the fragmentary Preface, was "to exhibit the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society." This she accomplished. And he who lays bare the festering sores of suffering humanity is also its benefactor.

The fourth volume of the *Posthumous Works* of Mary Wollstonecraft contains a series of lessons written by the author for the use of her little daughter Fanny; a number of letters written to Mr. Johnson, the Publisher; a *Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation; The Cave of Fancy, a Tale*, begun in earlier years and never finished; and an Essay *On Poetry and our Relish for the Beauties of Nature.* These Miscellaneous

[1] Mary, a Fiction, London, 1788.

pieces are interesting as giving fresh glimpses of the mind and talent of the author. But their value is slight, compared to the *Letters to Imlay*, which fill the whole of the third and part of the fourth volume.

It is certainly a rare occurrence in the history of Literature, that a man should publish after her death, the letters of his wife to a former lover or husband. It was evidently not her wish, that was thus carried out; for she says in one of the last of the letters: "And whatever I may think and feel, you need not fear that I shall publicly complain. No! If I have any criterion to judge of right and wrong, I have been most ungenerously treated: but, wishing now only to hide myself, I shall be silent as the grave in which I long to forget myself. I shall protect and provide for my child. I only mean by this to say, that you have nothing to fear from my desperation."[1] But Godwin evidently believed it due to his wife's memory, that it should be proven to the world in this most conclusive way, that Mary Wollstonecraft's relations to Imlay, though not sanctioned by English law, were considered by her sacred and binding, that the tie between them was not sundered by her, and that untold anguish preceded the last words she penned to Imlay: "I part with you in peace." Mr. C. Kegan Paul, Mary Wollstonecraft's vindicator in the present century, in re-publishing these *Letters to Imlay* may have been guided by the same motive.

[1] Posthumous Works, Vol. IV, p. 21; or Ç. Kegan Paul: Letters to Imlay, p. 193.

The literary discrimination however of both men, may have actuated them; for these letters are an unusual production viewed from the literary standpoint. Godwin boldly claims in his Preface that "the following letters may possibly be found to contain the finest examples of the language of sentiment and passion ever presented to the world." He points out that "they bear a striking resemblance to the celebrated romance of Werther, though the incidents to which they relate are of a very different cast." Hettner, in his able sketch of Rousseau says[1]: Goethe's Werther is the continuation and completion, marked by highest genius, of the key-note struck by Rousseau." Do the *Letters to Imlay* also bear the imprint of Rousseau upon them? They reveal a heart possessing rare possibilities of response to the touch of love. With an unusual glow and warmth of language they give glimpses of the freshness and depth of new-found happiness; the charm of which gradually vanishes, giving way to passionate expressions of anxious longing; till finally the note of despair vibrates through the long continued pain of deception and desertion. Rousseau's *New Heloise*, which Mary Wollstonecraft mentions in the *Wrongs of Woman*, thus speaks the language of the heart.

In one of the letters, she tells Imlay how their little daughter, then six months old, was delighted with the scarlet waistcoats and loud music at the *fête* of the previous day in memory of Rousseau,

[1] Hettner: Geschichte der französischen Literatur im XVIII Jahrhundert, p. 459.

and adds; "to honour J. J. Rousseau, I intend to give her a sash, the first she has ever had round her, and why not? for I have always been half in love with him." [1]

However, the admission that the *Letters to Imlay* may bear relationship to the genius of Rousseau must be hedged round by limitations. If "the historical significance of Rousseau lies in his vindication of the idealism of the heart, making its inalienable rights the foundation of social order," [2] then it must be admitted that the influence of this dangerous doctrine, offers a key to the tragedy of Mary Wollstonecraft's life. Farther than this a comparison can not extend; for there is in her life no trace of the contradictions of character, which make it difficult even for the most well-meaning of Rousseau's biographers to free his memory from serious reproach.

Mary Wollstonecraft's literary career was closed by death when she was thirty-eight years old. Her first literary venture was made ten years before. Much was condensed into this short period. It is vain to conjecture as to what might have been her further career by the side of a man of the literary and critical abilities of Godwin. She was planning to strike out again in pedagogical lines, in a series of letters on the management of children in their infancy. A number of *Hints*, to be incorporated in what was to be Part Second of her *Vindication*

[1] C. Kegan Paul: Letters to Imlay, p. 57.

[2] Hettner: Geschichte der französischen Literatur im XVIII Jahrhundert, p. 476.

of the Rights of Woman, also point to work planned. A rounded-out, complete life and career were not to be hers. In glancing over the period of her activity, it is not the more finished products of her later years, that rivet the attention of the student. It is that rugged outburst of ardent love for her sex, her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, that will probably pass down her name to the centuries to come.

Judged according to the standard of literary merit, the book has serious faults. It is replete with logical argument; yet there is a looseness in the arrangement of the material, that seriously detracts from its value. The author says in her Introductory Chapter: "I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style; I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected." Yet had she pruned the luxuriance of her eloquence, and toned down the harshness, with which she expresses many of her opinions, the same end would have been accomplished, while much of the outcry against the book might have been prevented.

The subject-matter of the book had evidently been the growth of years, but it seems to have been committed to writing with unusual rapidity. Godwin says: "The censure of the liberal critic as to the defects of this performance, will be changed into astonishment, when I tell him, that a work of this inestimable moment, was begun, carried on, and finished in the state in which it now appears, in a period of no more than six weeks."[1] This state-

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 84.

ment seems almost incredible, for in its last edition the book contains 287 pages 8vo., of fairly fine print. Yet to all appearances it is a piece of work written under the rapid dictates of genius and given to the world, without allowing room to riper reflection or aiming at more methodical arrangement.

As a literary production then, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* cannot lay claim to a place among books of first rank. Godwin predicted that on account of the importance of its doctrines, and the eminence of genius displayed, it did not seem very improbable that it would be read as long as the English language endures. But looking back upon the rapid succession of historical events since that time, there is an additional reason for its eminent place in literature: it marks an epoch in the history of civilization relative to the position of woman. The second half of the Eighteenth Century gave birth to many problems, which the present century has sought to solve; and one of them is the emancipation of woman. The discussion of the rights of men furnished the arguments for the rights of women. It was Mary Wollstonecraft's achievement, to see that out of the one must naturally follow the other, by way of logical sequence; and to gather into full expression the sentiments that were then beginning to force their way into the minds of men, was the service that she rendered her times. The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* then is the first proclamation of one of the movements peculiar to the history of the Nineteenth Century.

Books that serve as the battle-cry in the war of opinions frequently have no value to posterity save that of historical interest. They testify to the slow and contested growth of ideas, and stand as evidence that the facts of to-day are but the ideals of yesterday. The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* shares to some degree in the fate of books of its kind. Few people to-day would care to read it from beginning to end. There are pages of reasoning on matters which to-day are commonplaces. But on the other hand, Mary Wollstonecraft's theses still stand before the world as theses. One of them: Equality in education, has advanced somewhat farther than its counterpart: Equality in civil rights. One century has grappled with the problem, which will be bequeathed to the next still unsolved. If then the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* stands among the very outposts of the movement at the present time, it must have been more than a century in advance of average public opinion of its own time.

Godwin gives a glimpse of the attitude of the public toward this "very bold and original production." He says:

"The public at large formed very different opinions respecting the character of the performance. Many of the sentiments are undoubtedly of a rather masculine description. The spirited and decisive way in which the author explodes the system of gallantry, and the species of homage with which the female sex is usually treated, shocked the majority. Novelty produced a sentiment in their mind, which they mistook for a sense of injustice. The pretty, soft creatures that are so often to be found in the female sex, and that class of men who believe they could not exist without such pretty, soft creatures to resort to,

were in arms against the author of so heretical and blasphemous a doctrine." [1]

In looking over the pages of periodicals of that day, abundant evidence is found, that this book was considered to proclaim a "new system," to announce the tenets of a "new school." The most adverse of the criticisms of her contemporaries are to-day the surest evidence of the bold and valiant service which Mary Wollstonecraft rendered the cause for which she fought. But her friends too, incidentally testify to the novelty of her propositions. *The Analytical Review*, to which she was a contributor, seems to bring the earliest notice of the book, and anticipated the reception, which to all probability awaited "this singular and, on the whole, excellent production," by saying:

"The lesser wits will probably affect to make themselves merry at the title and apparent object of this publication; but we have no doubt, if even her contemporaries should fail to do her justice, posterity will compensate the defect; and have no hesitation in declaring, that if the bulk of the great truths which this publication contains were reduced to practice, the nation would be better, wiser and happier, than it is upon the wretched, trifling, useless and absurd system of education which is now prevalent." [2]

As translations and new editions in rapid succession abundantly testify, the civilized world was better prepared, at least to give attention to this work, strange and new in title and object though it seemed, than this friendly critic was ready to predict.

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[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 81.

[2] The Analytical Review, March 1792, p. 241—249.

The *Monthly Review* criticizes the book in an equally fair though more conservative spirit. Admitting that the author "is possessed of great energy of intellect, vigour of fancy and command of language; and that the performance suggests many reflections, which deserve the attention of the public," the critic proceeds with his strictures: "We do not, however, so zealously adopt Miss Wollstonecraft's plan for a revolution in female education and manners, as not to perceive that several of her opinions are fanciful and some of her projects romantic." Among the latter he seems specially to include the proposition of letting women assume an active part in civil government. However, the critic agrees with the fair writer, that "both the condition and the character of women are capable of great improvement."[1] There is here the wavering between assent and disapproval, that seems to have been the common attitude toward the book. Few endorsed it as unhesitatingly as the *Analytical Review;* few attempted so elaborate a condemnation as *The Critical Review.*[2]

This journal gave unlimited space to its review of this new book, evidently very soon after it made its appearance. The critic quotes at length, tries to show the fallacies in the reasoning and to refute the argument; but with little success. He first objects to the method applied. One of the strictest

[1] The Monthly Review or Literary Journal, June 1792, p. 198—209.

[2] The Critical Review or Annals of Literature, April 1792, p. 389—398, and June 1792, p. 132—141.

proofs in mathematical demonstrations is the *reductio ad absurdum.* The reasoning of the author, as she applies the boasted principles of the rights of men to those of women, must be admitted as correct. Many of her conclusions however, are so absurd, that he finds it evident, that the premises must be, in some respects, fallacious. After thus condemning the method on account of the conclusions which are reached, he pronounces the work "weak, desultory and trifling." The language he finds "flowing and flowery, but weak, diffuse and confused." He speaks of indelicacy of ideas and expressions, and with prudish respect for his readers, decides to draw the veil, rather than recount them. If the author meant this as a trial of skill with the stronger sex, he thinks she has wholly failed and has betrayed her own cause by defending it.

This critic also ventures on personal advice to the author of the book under review. He says:

> "It may be fancy, prejudice or obstinacy, we contend not for a name, but we are infinitely better pleased with the present system; and, in truth, dear young lady, for by the appellation sometimes prefixed to your name, we must suppose you to be young, endeavour to attain 'the weak elegancy of mind,' 'the sweet docility of manners,' 'the exquisite sensibility,' the former ornaments of your sex; we are certain you will be more pleasing and we dare pronounce that you will be infinitely happier."

The temper of the book evidently roused curiosity concerning the person of the author. Many expected to find in the champion of her sex, who was described as endeavouring to invest woman with

all the rights of man, as Godwin says, "a sturdy, muscular, raw-boned virago; and they were not a little surprised, when, instead of all this, they found a woman, lovely in her person, and, in the best and most engaging sense, feminine in her manners."[1] *The Gentleman's Magazine* gives a description of her personality in the Obituary Notice: "Her manners were gentle, easy and elegant; her conversation intelligent and amusing, without the least trait of literary pride, or the apparent consciousness of powers above the level of her sex; and for soundness of understanding and sensibility of heart, she was, perhaps, never equalled."[2] The contrast between these words of admiration and Horace Walpole's epithet: "that hyena in petticoats, Mrs. Wollstonecraft" is indeed great!

This epithet occurs in a letter to Miss Hannah More, who, moving in a sphere of work very different from that of Mary Wollstonecraft, and surrounded by influences orthodox and conservative, had no sympathy for the cause which Mary Wollstonecraft made her own. The letter was written after the latter's volume on the French Revolution had appeared. In it Horace Walpole addresses Hannah More: "Adieu, thou excellent woman! thou reverse of that hyena in petticoats, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, who to this day discharges her ink and gall on Marie Antoinette, whose unparalleled

[1] W. Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 83.

[2] The Gentleman's Magazine, 1797. Obituaries of Remarkable Persons.

sufferings have not yet staunched that Alecto's blazing ferocity."[1] At the time when the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* appeared, Hannah More wrote to him as follows:—

"I have been much pestered to read the 'Rights of Woman,' but am invincibly resolved not to do it. Of all jargon, I hate metaphysical jargon; beside, there is something fantastic and absurd in the very title. How many ways there are of being ridiculous! I am sure I have as much liberty as I can make a good use of, now I am an old maid; and when I was a young one I had, I daresay, more than was good for me . . . . To be unstable and capricious, I really think, is but too characteristic of our sex; and there is, perhaps, no animal so much indebted to subordination for its good behaviour as woman."

To this Horace Walpole replies:—

"It is better to thank Providence for the tranquillity and happiness we enjoy in this country, in spite of the philosophizing serpents we have in our bosom, the Paines, Tookes and the Wollstonecrafts. I am glad you have not read the tract of the last mentioned writer. I would not look at it, though assured it contains neither metaphysics nor politics; but as she entered the lists of the latter, and borrowed the title from the demon's book which aimed at spreading the *wrongs* of men, she is excommunicated from the pale of my library. We have had enough of new systems, and the world a great deal too much already."[2]

Horace Walpole with his aristocratic birth and tastes could not find a congenial element in revolutionary agitation of any kind. He says of himself: "My opinions are for myself, I meddle not with those of others." And again: "I know I have always been a coward on points of religion and

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The Letters of Horace Walpole; Edited by Peter Cunningham, London, 1859. Volume IX.

[1] Letter to Miss Hannah More, January 24, 1795, p. 452.

[2] *Ibid.*, August 21, 1792, p. 385.

politics."[1] He looked with undisguised horror upon the proceedings of the French Revolution; and the French Republicans were to him "hosts of banditti," "a legion of assassins," who, he believed, had "blasted and branded liberty perhaps for centuries."[2] There was therefore the widest divergency between him and Mary Wollstonecraft.

The critic, who had the presumption to recommend to Mary Wollstonecraft the former ornaments of her sex, that she might be more pleasing and infinitely happier, makes the following appeal:

> "We call on men therefore to speak, if they would wish the women to be pupils of this new school! We call on the women to declare, whether they will sacrifice their pleasing qualities for the severity of reason, the bold unabashed dignity of speaking what they feel, of rising superior to the vulgar prejudices of decency and propriety. We may easily anticipate the answer, and shall leave Miss Wollstonecraft at least to oblivion; her best friends can never wish that her work should be remembered."[3]

Conservatism, in accordance with its nature, is ever willing to see progressive thought shrink away into oblivion, and has ever been ready to spread the mantle of silence; too often in the course of history it has been the silence of death, over him who dares to give the new truth a powerful utterance. Mary Wollstonecraft's book is still remembered, and the new school, the tenets of which she was perhaps the first to fully enunciate, is an historical fact, which inevitably must find its place in the records of the history of civilization in the nineteenth century.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 390. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

[3] The Critical Review, June 1792.

CHAPTER III.

HER RELIGIOUS AND ETHICAL VIEWS.

THE letters of Mary Wollstonecraft, which for the first time were published in 1876 by Mr. C. Kegan Paul in his Life of Godwin, constitute a valuable source of biographical interest. Not until after their publication could it be demonstrated that she passed through several phases of religious thought; that she was not always a rationalist; that there was a time when she was a Christian in the evangelical sense of the term, when she questioned not the doctrines of the Church, but sought to bear her troubles with Christian fortitude, looking for comfort to the One, who with the Christian world, she believed, is nigh unto them that trust in Him.

The series of letters begins in November 1783, at the sickbed of her younger sister, Eliza. An account is given of the progress of the illness and the growing determination in the mind of Mary to end the wretchedness of the sufferer by aiding her in her flight from her husband. These letters give a very vivid glimpse of Mary's struggle with poverty, while attempting to conduct a school at Newington Green; they relate the death of her friend, Fanny, at Lisbon, cover the period of her

stay at the castle of Lord Kingsborough in Ireland, and contain an account of the motives and circumstances which led to her residence in London, and to the literary work in which she there engaged. Addressed to members of the family and intimate friends, they give a detailed record of a period of her life, that had been but very briefly touched by Godwin in his Memoirs of his wife.

Those who would charge Mary Wollstonecraft with a spirit of defiance against received traditions, find nothing in these letters to uphold them. On the contrary, a very humble spirit characterizes, at least, that first bold act of the kind, when she helped her sister Eliza to escape from marriage-ties that had become unbearable. In a letter telling her sister Everina of friends who had turned from her because of "this scheme, that was contrary to all the rules of conduct that are published for the benefit of new married ladies," she adds:

"Don't suppose I am preaching, when I say uniformity of conduct cannot in any degree be expected from those whose first motive of action is not the pleasing the Supreme Being, and those who humbly rely on Providence will not only be supported in affliction, but have a peace imparted to them that is past all describing."[1]

The same deeply pious tone pervades other letters. To a friend she writes: "It gives me the sincerest satisfaction to find that you look for comfort where only it is to be met with, and that Being in whom you trust will not desert you."[2]

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[1] C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries, Vol. I, p. 171.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Watching by the side of the deathbed of her friend Fanny, she writes to her sisters: "Could I not look for comfort, where only 'tis to be found, I should have been mad before this, but I feel that I am supported by that Being who alone can heal a wounded spirit."[1] Nor is she in this early period in any sense at variance with the faith and the hopes that inspire the Christian world. She writes in a letter to a friend: "I feel myself particularly attached to those, who are heirs of the promises and travel on in the thorny path with the same Christian hopes that render my severe trials a cause of thankfulness when I can think."[2]

Godwin's statements regarding his wife's religious views are very meagre and must be accepted with some degree of hesitation; for here, as elsewhere in her Memoirs, he seems inclined to substitute his own philosophical views for the actual facts of the case. The following sentence is an instance of this tendency. He says: "In fact, she had received few lessons of religion in her youth, and her religion was almost entirely of her own creation."[3] If this had been the case, Mary would not, in the letters under review, have used the phraseology of Christendom, nor would she have quoted passages from the Bible with so much readiness. Godwin is probably correct, however, in saying that his wife had been brought up in the tenets of the Church of England; that until

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 178. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[3] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 34.

the year 1787, she regularly frequented public worship, for the most part, according to the forms of that Church; and that after that period her attendance became less constant, and in no long time was wholly discontinued. There is also no doubt with regard to Mary's friendship with Dr. Richard Price, known in the scientific world as a writer on financial, political and ethical questions; in history as the man who called forth Edmund Burke's fiery outburst against the French Revolution. Godwin indicates that it was respect for the man, "which was not accompanied with a superstitious adherence to his doctrines," that led her occasionally to listen to the sermons of Dr. Price. He would not have made this assertion, had he been aware of the contents of the letters, which now lie before the world, which, in their religious leanings were deeply in sympathy with the spirit and teachings of the famous Dissenting preacher.

In her earlier literary work [illegible] is also manifest. The two [illegible] *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* and *Mary, a Fiction*, [illegible] attitude of mind and heart [illegible] say, that her career [illegible] She might have become [illegible] More [illegible] and much [illegible] of new and radical [illegible] *Woman* might have [illegible] time that [illegible] without [illegible] [illegible]

But it was not to be thus. Religious influences ceased to be paramount in her life. She found herself within a circle of friends and associates in London, who represented various schools of English and Continental thought, and all were engaged in trying to solve by the light of reason the problems peculiar to those times. Descartes had a century previous pointed out the road. He had left the old beaten track of accepted opinions and had turned to reason as the one sure proof of existence itself. His *Cogito ergo sum* rang in various changes through the Deist controversy that squandered so much of valuable energy in endless discussion. It dictated to Locke his task, when he set himself to explore the laws according to which the human understanding converts impressions upon the senses into ideas. It opened the investigation in the school of Moral Philosophy in England concerning the nature of virtue, whether dependent upon a moral sense, or whether the product of reason.

Mary Wollstonecraft's mental activity during those years must have been rich in the experience which is the heritage of an honest effort to answer the question: What is truth? As she says:

"A few fundamental truths meet the first enquiry of reason, and appear as clear to an unwarped mind, as that air and bread are necessary to enable the body to fulfil its vital functions; but the opinions which men discuss with so much heat must be simplified and brought back to first principles; or who can discriminate the vagaries of the imagination, or scrupulosity of weakness, from the verdict of reason?"[1]

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 37.

She gathered together what appealed to her as truth, from various systems of thought that commanded attention in her time and formed her own system of thought on which she built her opinions. Every question that confronted her, she brought to the test of reason. Before her sojourn in London the heart and its claims had been predominant; now reason stands at the front and demands satisfaction. This period of her thought is decidedly rationalistic in character; yet, it is not without rich notes that come straight from the heart. One of the richest of these is contained in the following passage:

> "Religion, pure source of comfort in this vale of tears! how has the clear stream been muddled by the dabblers, who have presumptuously endeavoured to confine in one narrow channel the living waters that ever flow towards God—the sublime ocean of existence! What would life be without that peace which the love of God, when built on humanity, alone can impart? Every earthly affection turns back, at intervals, to prey upon the heart that feeds it; and the purest effusions of benevolence, often rudely damped by man, must mount as a free-will offering to Him who gave them birth, whose bright image they faintly reflect."[1]

Mary Wollstonecraft remained a theist to the last. It seems the existence of God was to her mind a fundamental truth, perceived and accepted intuitively. But during the period under review, even her theism had its rationalistic tendency. It is reason that scans the attributes of the Almighty, that perceives the infinite harmony with which one attribute seems to imply the other. And this lofty worship, that satisfies the soul in beholding the perfections of the Divine Being is the only

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 241.

worship, which she considers worthy of rational beings. She says:

"I disclaim the specious humility which, after investigating nature, stops at the author. The High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, doubtless possesses many attributes of which we can form no conception; but reason tells me that they cannot clash with those I adore - and I am compelled to listen to her voice."[1]

She here probably refers to Rousseau, who in his famous *Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard* had reasoned concerning a God, who must be an intelligence, who must possess spirituality, power, and will, and then had made a halt, and confessed his inability to discover the nature of God. Locke on the other hand, had demonstrated the existence of God, and his attributes according to the laws of the human understanding. Mary Wollstonecraft made the conviction, that human reason is able to penetrate into the nature of, at least, some of the attributes of God, the pivotal point in her reasoning on ethical questions. She calls the attributes of God "the everlasting foundation on which reason builds both morality and religion."[2] She asserts that "the darkness, which hides our God from us, only respects speculative truths, it never obscures moral ones; they shine clearly, for God is light, and never, by the constitution of our nature, requires the discharge of a duty the reasonableness of which does not beam on us when we open our eyes."[3] That only is virtue, which the judgment of reason distinguishes as

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 85.
[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 9.
[3] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 231.

virtue; for reason speaks in moral questions with divine authority.

This tendency to identify ethics with intellectual apprehension shows that Mary Wollstonecraft was in touch with the controversy carried on in the school of Moral Philosophy. Dr. Richard Price looked with disfavor upon the theory concerning a Moral Sense, but found it necessary to draw a distinction between Speculative Reason and Moral Reason,[1] a distinction which coincides with Kant's Theoretical and Practical Knowledge. Mary Wollstonecraft speaks of speculative and moral truths, and claims that the latter are perceived by an act of intelligence and not by the exercise of a special moral faculty. She is in this respect a pupil of Dr. Price.

If then so much importance is attached to the functions of reason, what would Mary Wollstonecraft say concerning the nature of reason? She calls it "the simple power of improvement, the power of discerning truth."[2] Locke gives a definition of reason that expresses to some extent Mary Wollstonecraft's conception of it. He says: "Reason is natural revelation, whereby the Eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within the reach of their natural faculties."[3] But Mary Wollstonecraft goes beyond

[1] Dr. Richard Price: Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals. 1758, p. 393.

[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 94.

[3] J. Locke: Essay concerning Human Understanding, Book IV, Chap. 19, § 4.

this definition and adds a mystic element, that finds no place in Locke's philosophy. Reason she considers not only a natural revelation, but "a tie that connects the creature with the Creator," and she goes still further, when she says: "the nature of reason must be the same in all, if it be an emanation of divinity."[1] These are conceptions that evade the grasp of Locke's Empiricism and bear relation to Plato's Idealism.

She considers the passions necessary auxiliaries of reason, and in direct contradiction to other moralists, who, she claims, have coolly seen mankind through the medium of books, she asserts that the regulation of the passions is not always wisdom. Life, as Mary Wollstonecraft looks upon it, offers opportunity for a contest between the passions and reason, and no one who lays claim to perfectibility, can withdraw from it. A state of innocence is impossible, and a knowledge of the world, which theoretically acquaints itself with life, in order practically to avoid the heat of the contest is hurtful; for great talents as well as great virtues must have ample room for development, and should not with calculating prudence be laid in fetters. And though she admits that the knowledge thus acquired may sometimes be purchased at too dear a rate, she says she can only answer, that she very much doubts whether any knowledge can be obtained without labour and sorrow.

The individual finds, after the force of passions, that raised some object above its surroundings, as

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 94.

specially desirable, has spent itself, that he is in possession of new ideas, a habit of thinking, and some stable principles. But not only to himself does he find that benefit has accrued; his attitude toward his fellowmen is affected. He cannot judge their failings harshly; for he realizes that "we are formed of the same earth and breathe the same element."[1]

She does not give assent to the doctrine in the theology of her times, according to which the weakness and the vices of men call forth positive punishment from God. It appears to her so contrary to the nature of God, discoverable in all his works and in our reason, that he should punish without the benevolent design of reforming, that she "would sooner believe that the Deity paid no attention to the conduct of men."[2] This conclusion, which she did not draw, would have been in harmony with Deism; she had a strong belief in God's immanent power in the world. Her rationalistic attitude toward religion as revealed in sacred writings is deistic. She declines to believe anything contrary to reason, possibly that which is beyond reason; but in either case, reason determines the norm, according to which the decision falls. As Lechler[3] says of Locke, so it may be said of her, that as regards that aspect of her thought that seems to make religion equivalent to mere reasonableness, she is a Deist. But as regards

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 206.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 271.
[3] G. V. Lechler: Geschichte des Englischen Deismus, p. 179.

the supra-naturalistic tendency of her thought, her place is on the side opposed to Deism.

Her conception of evil is far more in harmony with philosophical speculation than with the accepted dogma of the church. Rousseau ranges himself on the side of theological opinion in saying: "Oh man! Seek not the originator of evil, for thou thyself art he!"[1] He considers evil the result of a misuse of the liberty granted by Providence to man. In the universe he sees a conformity with divine law, which never fails, and evil lies in the violation of that law, "but that which man does with full freedom of choice, cannot be considered as part of the divine order of the universe."[2] In her *Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft opposes Rousseau's proposition that God had made all things right and error had been introduced by the creature, as equally unphilosophical and impious. "Could the helpless creature, whom that wise Being called from nothing, break loose from his Providence and boldly learn to know good by practising evil, without his permission?"[3]

The inevitable sequence of her argument, that evil is not the work of man, but a part of Divine Providence, could not but ultimately lead to conclusions, that seemed directed against the existence of God. She faces this aspect of the problem in Paris, in the sight of the excesses to which the passions of men impelled them, driven by the memory of past misery and a lively sense of

[1] Rousseau: Emile IV, § 269. [2] *Ibid.*, § 267.

[3] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 42.

present wrong. She writes in a letter intended for print:

"Before I came to France, I cherished, you know, an opinion, that strong virtues might exist with the polished manners produced by the progress of civilization; and I even anticipated the epoch, when, in the course of improvement, men would labour to become virtuous, without being goaded on by misery. But now, the perspective of the golden age, fading before the attentive eye of observation, almost eludes my sight; and, losing thus in part my theory of a more perfect state, start not, my friend, if I bring forward an opinion, which at the first glance seems to be levelled against the existence of God! I am not become an Atheist, I assure you, by residing at Paris: yet I begin to fear that vice, or, if you will, evil, is the grand mobile of action, and that, when the passions are justly poised, we become harmless, and in the same proportion useless."[1]

This letter is the expression of a change in her views that had taken place during her sojourn in Paris. Thus far she had been decidedly optimistic. She said: "Rousseau exerts himself to prove that all *was* right originally: a crowd of authors that all *is* now right: and I, that all will *be* right"[2] She then believed in the ultimate victory of good over evil. When doubt arose in her mind, whether such victory in its effects would be conducive to the best interests of the race, she was aware that this doubt conflicted with her belief in the existence of God; for she had made his Providence responsible for the origin of evil. But this note of pessimism does not endure. Her spirit could not but rise to heights of faith, to see from afar a time, when men would "do unto others,

[1] Posthumous Works. Vol. IV, p. 45.
[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 43.

what they wish they should do unto them." That she quotes these words of Christ in one of her later works,[1] as the ray of light, which, if followed, must broaden out to the full light of a glorious day, is an indication of the profound reverence in which she holds him and his precepts.

To gauge that which is said, not said or only implied, in order to determine, whether there is a new attitude of mind, is a task beset with the possibilities of error. In the case of Mary Wollstonecraft it was not difficult to find a degree of change sufficient to mark out a period of religious thought that was evangelical, a worship of the heart; and another that was rationalistic, an eager seeking for truth as acceptable to reason. Rationalism never ceased to assert its hold upon her, and thus the second period cannot be said to have terminated. It continued to the end. Yet with the beginning of her sojourn in Paris there is a change, imperceptible almost, and characterized not by any new views expressed by her, but rather by silence on subjects, which were up to that time prominent topics of discussion with her. In the books of this period she no longer enters wide digressions, in order to deliver her opinion regarding religious and ethical subjects. She had worked her way through the tangle of conflicting opinions. She had argued for and against. But that was over now. Yet he who looks for them, finds the same foundations, so carefully laid in previous years.

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[1] The Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, p. 15.

There is a trace in her *Letters to Imlay* of the spirit that pervaded those early letters, written when sorrow and poverty pressed heavily at her door. The same attempt to rest humbly in the unsearchable will of an Almighty God impels her to write to Imlay: "The tremendous power who formed this heart, must have foreseen that, in a world in which self-interest, in various shapes, is the principal mobile, I had little chance of escaping misery. To the fiat of fate I submit."[1] Not by way of mere ejaculation, but rather as an appeal to the highest power, does she write to Imlay: "For God's sake, keep me no longer in suspense."[2] She frequently closed her letters to him with "God bless you!" Before she went on that cruel errand,—walking for hours in the rain on the bridge of the Thames, that her clothes might be drenched and she the more certain to sink, when she sought death in the waters below, —she wrote to him: "God bless you! May you never know by experience what you have made me endure."[3]

But the silence on religious subjects deepens, and a change now begins in her ethical views. Imlay vanishes from our sight, and we have before us the letters written to Godwin during the short period of their attachment, and the fragment of her novel *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman.* Maria, the heroine of her last book, is a woman who is a stranger evidently to the warm impulses of

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[1] Letters to Imlay, p. 178. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 205. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

religious thought. Ethically considered, this book advocates individual liberty somewhat to the disadvantage of those principles of law and order, which the human race has evolved amid so much of pain and struggle.

Death came and found her in a frame of mind of which Godwin says: "Nothing could exceed the equanimity, the patience and affectionateness of the poor sufferer."[1] Miss Hayes, a lady of some little literary fame, in whose house Mary Wollstonecraft met William Godwin, and who was with her during the last four days of her life, wrote to Mr. Hugh Skeys, the husband of the Fanny of those early days of devoted friendship:

> "Though I have had but little experience in scenes of this sort, yet I confidently affirm that my imagination could never have pictured to me a mind so tranquil, under affliction so great. Her whole soul seemed to dwell with anxious fondness on her friends; and her affections, which were at all times more alive than perhaps those of any other human being, seemed to gather more disinterestedness upon this trying occasion. The attachment and regret of those who surrounded her appeared to increase every hour, and if her principles are to be judged of by what I saw of her death, I should say that no principles could be more conducive to calmness and consolation." [2]

Nothing of a strictly religious nature seems to have been said by the side of Mary Wollstonecraft's death-bed. Clergymen were not among the friends of those later days. Godwin, was not the man to invite expressions of feeling called forth by the near approach of death. Mr. C. Kegan Paul relates

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[1] Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 184.

[2] C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, etc., Vol. I, p. 282.

the following incident, characteristic of the unsentimental materialism of Godwin:

"In one of Mary Wollstonecraft's last hours, when she was suffering acute agony, Mr. Basil Montagu ran to Dr. Carlisle, and returned before the physician with an anodyne. The medicine had an immediate effect, and she turned to her husband, who held her hand, with a sigh of relief, and said, "Oh Godwin, I am in heaven." But even at that moment Godwin declined to be entrapped into the admission that heaven existed, and he calmly replied, "You mean, my dear, that your physical sensations are somewhat easier."[1]

In his memoir of his wife, so little calculated to hush the voice of vituperation, Godwin, in speaking of her last days, says: "During her whole illness, not one word of a religious cast fell from her lips."[2] "Mr. Godwin seems more especially to triumph in this circumstance," writes one, *Philalethus*, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year, and adds: "For a dying person, perfectly sensible of his condition, not to utter one word about a future state, not even to advert for a moment to prospects of immortality, is singularly strange and unaccountable?"[3] Another writer, under the signature "Constant Reader," says in a letter to the Editor of the same Magazine, nearly a month later: "It would be highly honorable to the female sex, if some expressive writer would contrast Mr. Godwin's boast of his wife's dying hours with the manner in

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[1] C. Kegan Paul: Prefatory Memoir to Letters to Imlay, p. LIX.

[2] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 190.

[3] The Gentleman's Magazine, March 13, 1798.

which some excellent characters live."[1] And then follows a comparison of Mary Wollstonecraft with Mrs. E. Carter.

Harsh, discordant notes are these, sounded over the grave of one, who, five years before, had claimed that every difficulty in morals, that equally baffles the investigation of profound thinking, and the lightning glance of genius, is an argument on which to build the belief of the immortality of the soul. Even a year before her death she wrote: "Surely something resides in this heart that is not perishable—and life is more than a dream."[2]

The reproach of irreligiousness clung to the memory of Mary Wollstonecraft until of late years, and even now the statement is made by way of biographical fact, that she, "unlike her husband, was a decided theist, though not a Christian."[3] As her family correspondence testifies, she was, until she was nearly thirty years old, in every sense of the term, a Christian. What was she in her later years? As a thinker she belonged to the rationalistic school. As to her religious views, where is her place? She certainly was not an atheist; nor could scepticism ever assert its hold upon her; neither can she be ranked among Freethinkers, still prominent in her time in England; for her attitude toward Christianity was not hostile. With regard to some of her views, she was a Deist, but

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[1] The Gentleman's Magazine, April 12, 1798.

[2] Letters from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, p. 97.

[3] Leslie Stephen: History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century. Vol. II, p. 276.

these were not sufficiently vital to give her a place in that school. True, she did not accept the doctrine of original sin; she did not believe in the eternal torments of hell; Satan was to her an allegorical person; and parts of the Bible she considered in the light of tradition rather than as verbal inspiration. This deviation from orthodoxy cannot, however, have been the reason why she should have been regarded as standing apart from the host of men and women, who as Christians represent a tremendous force towards the uplifting of humanity.

It cannot but be considered unfortunate that it was Godwin's hand that painted the picture of Mary Wollstonecraft, that was passed down to posterity and was regarded until recent years, as the authentic record of her life and the true general statement of the chief characteristics of her thought. He was an atheist and moreover had accustomed himself to look upon the phenomena of the mind as subject to the same calm demonstration which is applied to Mathematics. His wife's belief in God, and the impulses of a devout nature which were born of this faith, eluded both his logic and his psychological insight. Yet he too mentions her delight in nature, and her custom when walking amidst the wonders of nature to converse with her God. Even five years after the time, when as Godwin says, "the prejudices of her early years suffered a vehement concussion," she wrote passages in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, that seem to indicate plainly a belief in the

divinity of Christ. She rarely mentions him and his precepts, but never in aught but the tone of profound reverence.

Mary Wollstonecraft did not call upon the religious institutions which seek to represent the principles of Christianity, to serve as allies in vindicating to woman her rights. Her attitude toward the Church was negative. She criticized freely, and with an unsparing hand, the abuses that had crept into the Church, but never as one who delights to scoff at that, which seems to others holy and without a flaw. Yet she seems to have given offence to some of her contemporaries by her stringent criticism of practices, then current in some of the English schools, which, she thought, made religion worse than a farce. "What good," she asks, "can be expected from the youth who receives the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to avoid forfeiting half a guinea, which he probably afterwards spends in some sensual manner?" Boys sought to elude the necessity of attending public worship, and she thought this justified, "for such a constant repetition of the same thing must be a very irksome restraint on their natural vivacity." "As these ceremonies," she adds, "have a most fatal effect on their morals, and as a ritual performed by the lips, when the heart and mind are far away, is not now stored up by our Church as a bank to draw on for the fees of the poor souls in purgatory, why should they not be abolished?"[1]

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 239.

Mrs. West in her *Letters to a young Man* misquotes this passage, and is consequently taken to task by Mary Wollstonecraft's anonymous defender, for mutilating the language of one, whom she harshly classes with "infidels, deists, the enemies of Christ, of law, morality and decency." In corroboration of what Mary Wollstonecraft affirms, he addresses Mrs. West as follows:

> "And if you yourself, my dear madam, knew but one-half of what I have been both an ear and eye witness to, from men as well as boys, respecting the compulsory attendance on the sacrament and prayers; you would not hesitate to acknowledge, that these ceremonies have a most fatal effect on the morals of such persons; not as a necessary, but as an accidental cause; which is all that Mary Wollstonecraft ever meant to imply."[1]

Perhaps also there was some occasion for the impatience, with which Mary Wollstonecraft regards the conduct and character of the clergy, designated by her as "indolent slugs, who guard, by sliming it over, the snug place, which they consider in the light of an hereditary estate; and eat and drink and enjoy themselves, instead of fulfilling the duties, excepting a few empty forms, for which it was endowed."[2]

These criticisms, not undeserved in some cases, perhaps, were yet severe, and may account somewhat for the degree of hostility, with which some of her contemporaries consigned Mary Wollstonecraft to a place among those, who, by the Christian world

[1] A Defence of the Character and Conduct of the late Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin; in a series of Letters to a Lady, London, 1803, p. 159.

[2] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 239.

were regarded with a species of abhorrence. Few were aware of the faith, the Christian hopes, that characterised the early part of her career. Her criticism of the dogmas of the church, of the shortcomings of the clergy, during the years of her greatest popularity as a writer, were well known, and were more or less resented. The silence on religious subjects, of the last year of her life, the one spent by the side of Godwin, in whatever way it may be interpreted, is one of the saddest aspects of a life that was full of pathos.

CHAPTER IV.

The Rights of Man and Her Reply to Edmund Burke.

Godwin's account of his wife's childhood conveys the impression, that she early respected her own rights, and that she contended for the rights of others. Her father was a despot in his family. His violent temper, when manifested toward herself, roused Mary's indignation. "Upon such occasions," Godwin says, "she felt her superiority, and was apt to betray marks of contempt."[1] When her mother was threatened with violence, she threw herself between the tyrant and his victim. "She has even spent whole nights upon the landing-place near their chamber-door, when, mistakenly, or with reason, she apprehended that her father might break out into paroxysms of violence."[2]

Godwin relates[3] an incident, significant of the championship, which she was ever ready to assume in behalf of those wronged. It happened when

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[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 9.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

she was on her way back to London from Lisbon, where she had watched by the side of the death-bed of her dearest friend, Fanny. The captain of the English vessel, on which she had embarked, was hailed by the crew of a French vessel in distress, and entreated to take the ship-wrecked sailors on board. He was a hard man, and replied, that his stock of provisions was by no means adequate to feed an additional number of mouths, and absolutely refused compliance. Mary took up the cause of the sufferers and threatened, that she would have the captain called to a severe account, when he arrived in England. She finally prevailed, and the lives of the men were saved.

When she found herself in the midst of fashionable life on the castle of Lord Kingsborough, she was far from being overwhelmed by the show of wealth and station. She soon detected the glamor of false refinement of manners. In the very first letter to her sister Everina, she writes: "A fine lady is a new species to me of animals . . . . . . The forms and parade of high life suit not my mind."[1] A few days later she writes to Eliza,

> "You have a sneaking kindness, you say, for people of quality, and I almost forgot to tell you I was in company with a Lord Fingal in the packet. Shall I try to remember the titles of all the Lords and Viscounts I am in company with, not forgetting the clever things they say? I would sooner tell you a tale of some humbler creatures; I intend visiting the poor cabins; as Miss Kingsborough is allowed to assist the poor, and I shall make a point of finding them out."[2]

[1] C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, etc., Vol. I, p. 186.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Four months later she read Rousseau's *Emile* with evident enjoyment. She writes to her sister (March 24, 1788):

"I am now reading Rousseau's *Emile*, and love his paradoxes. He chooses a common capacity to educate, and gives as a reason that a genius will educate itself. However he rambles into that chimerical world in which I have too often wandered, and draws the usual conclusion that all is vanity and vexation of spirit."[1]

As yet there is no evidence of theory and speculation with regard to political subjects. She was bent rather on psychological research. Her books of this period abound in delineation of character and observation of human nature, and have a very strong background of religious thought and feeling. The hope of Heaven finds fervent expression in the heroine of *Mary, a Fiction*, a picture, no doubt, of Mary Wollstonecraft's own state of mind at that time. Her letters give evidence of an almost morbid weariness of life. While staying for a few weeks in the house of Mr. Prior, a teacher at Eton, on her way to her appointment as governess in the family of Lord Kingsborough, she writes to her sister:

"My thoughts and wishes tend to that land where the God of love will wipe away all tears from our eyes, where sincerity and truth will flourish, and the imagination will not dwell on pleasing illusions, which vanish like dreams, when experience forces us to see things as they really are."[2]

The possibilities of her nature, both for happiness and for wretchedness were great. Life had

[1] C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, etc., Vol. I, p. 189.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

brought her much of the latter, and the former, she realized, was tinged with much of delusion. She was weary of this and sick at heart. The conditions for happiness, which she sought in vain in this existence, must be present, she believed, in a life to come. Upon this she placed her hopes. This utter dissatisfaction with existing conditions, was perhaps a necessary prelude to the zeal, which later inspired her as a reformer.

A change however was wrought. The languor of weary waiting, till life might be over, was replaced by a fervent desire to live and serve humanity. Her eyes turned from the possibilities of a life to come, and became intently fixed upon the means of creating conditions for happiness in the present life. Various causes worked together, no doubt, to make life seem attractive and desirable to her, after she had settled as a writer in London; but one of them must have been this eager planning for a new world, which she and others hoped to see arise from the downfall of old and time-worn institutions.

The change came after she had become a member of the social circle in London, that represented the extreme side of liberal thought in England during those stirring times. The house of the publisher, Mr. Johnson, who was not only Mary Wollstonecraft's employer, but also a friend of almost fatherly solicitude, was the place where the school of English reformers were wont to meet for discussion and exchange of opinion concerning the developments of the Revolution in France. It was well known, that books, which, by reason of

their radical tendency, had been declined by other publishers, would not, on this account, be unfavorably regarded by him. This temerity worked mischievously for him, during the troubled years in the latter part of the reign of George III., when he was fined and imprisoned, on account of the publication of writings too outspoken.

Thomas Paine was one of the frequentors of Mr. Johnson's house. Fuseli, full of enthusiasm for Rousseau's ideas and for revolutionary matters, came several times each week. Godwin, speculating on matters social and political, also came on stated days. There was Priestly, who suffered more than others in that circle, because of his pronounced antagonism to all establishments, political and religious. Bonnycastle, Dr. Geddes, and Dr. George Fordyce were frequent guests. Distinguished visitors from abroad too, whose interests were with liberty, were wont to seek the acquaintance of those to be found here. It was thus that Mary Wollstonecraft made the acquaintance of Lavater, while in England; and of Talleyrand on his occasional visits.

Surprise and indignation was called forth in this circle of thinkers by Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France.* It caused surprise because he had not heretofore shown himself intolerant; and had raised a powerful note of warning when King George III. refused to lend ear to the demands of the American colonies. It caused indignation; for it was full of bitter invectives and angry accusations. Burke had reached the close of a long and eventful political career. Sorrow had

overtaken him in his family life, sickness cast its gloom about him. Once more he gathered his gigantic powers of oratory together; and it was to hurl curses upon political events, which were yet of a nature to gladden the heart of the enthusiast. Those dark days, when it became apparent, that liberty had become but the cover, beneath which human passions could work their worst, had not yet come. Burke's dismal forebodings struck a most discordant note.

The immediate cause of this fiery outburst on the part of Edmund Burke was an anniversary sermon preached by Dr. Richard Price, to commemorate the Revolution of 1688. He, on this occasion, expressed the warm approbation, with which he and the society of Revolutionists regarded the proceedings of the French Republicans. There were few men of liberal principles in those days, who did not look upon the events, transpiring in France, as the rising of the day-star. This sermon had been printed; and furnished to Burke the target for sarcasms, without number.

Mary Wollstonecraft's reply to Burke was the first of the numerous replies which his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* evoked. Godwin asserts this at a time, when many were living, who might have denied the statement, had it not been true. Not less than thirty-eight replies appeared within the first year or two after its publication.[1] Ultimately, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* voiced, in so incisive a manner, the senti-

[1] James Prior: Life of Edmund Burke, p. 322.

ments of the liberal party, that other similar expressions were laid aside and overlooked. But Mary Wollstonecraft's reply went through two editions; and was in the fervor of its sentiment, and its impassioned language eminently calculated to attract attention. It was evidently written at the spur of the moment. Excitement carried the writer forward. When she had come to about the middle of her book, the fire of enthusiasm began to burn low, and seemed to have spent itself. With her wonted frankness and confidence, she complained to Mr. Johnson, that lassitude had overtaken her, which made it impossible to complete her task. He asked her not to do violence to herself, and readily offered to throw away the first sheets of her book, which had already been printed. Stung by this easy compliance on his part, her pride was roused, and she went home to complete her book.

It is no disparagement to Mary Wollstonecraft's powers of discrimination, to say, that she did not interpret correctly Burke's attitude toward the French Revolution. This was a task suited to calmer minds of the present century, not to those who stood in the heat of the controversy. It is not however thus easy to excuse the lack of courtesy to her opponent. She defends Dr. Price in saying to Mr. Burke: "In reprobating Dr. Price's opinions, you might have spared the man; and if you had had but half as much reverence for the grey hairs of virtue as for the accidental distinctions of rank, you would not have treated with such indecent familiarity and supercilious contempt, a member

of the community whose talents and modest virtues place him high in the scale of moral excellence."[1] She is open to the same reproof; for she too might have spared the man of grey hairs, remembering his staunch adherence to liberal principles, throughout a long and honorable career as statesman.

Why had hatred of the French Revolution taken possession of Burke? This is the question that confronts Mary Wollstonecraft at the very outset. The following passage does credit to her psychological insight, as placed side by side with the theory of a great historian of the present century.

> "However, as you have informed us that respect chills love, it is natural to conclude, that all your pretty flights arise from your pampered sensibility; and that, vain of this fancied pre-eminence of organs, you foster every emotion till the fumes, mounting to your brain, dispel the sober suggestions of reason. It is not in this view surprising, that when you should argue you become impassioned, and that reflection inflames your imagination, instead of enlightening your understanding."[2]

She gives here, though not couched in words of profound pity, a forecast of Buckle's theory, who says:

> "At this distance of time, when his nearest relations are no more, it would be affectation to deny that Burke, during the last few years of his life, fell into a state of complete hallucination . . . . When the crimes of that great revolution, instead of diminishing, continued to increase, then it was that the feelings of Burke finally mastered his reason, the balance tottered; the proportions of that gigantic intellect were disturbed . . . . His mind, once so steady, so little swayed by prejudice and passion, reeled under the pressure of events which turned the brains of thousands."[3]

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[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 34. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[3] Buckle: History of Civilization, Vol. I, p. 424.

Burke was not at any period of his career, as statesman, on the side of the revolutionary principle; though he was eminently in favor of reform; and anticipated many of the great measures of the present century. In possession of ample materials for generalization, and of large capacity as a speculative thinker, his political principles were yet altogether practical. The empiric, not the speculative method was his. "Politics," he says, "ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature; of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part."[1] Burke's policy as statesman may be said to be without philosophical basis.[2]

Mary Wollstonecraft belonged to the school of Revolutionists. She believed in laying the foundation of the political structure upon abstract principles. The evils of political and social life, which to her eager eyes had assumed such great proportions, would, she believed, yield to the sway of reason. Her rationalism, so prominent in her religious and ethical views, could not but assert itself in her political views also. She goes to the heart of the controversy, when she attacks Burke's latest expression of his belief in the development of history, in accordance with an unerring impulse, an instinct. He says: "In England we still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians,

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[1] Burke's "Observations on a late state of the Nation."

[2] R. VonMohl: Geschichte und Literatur der Staatswissenschaften. Vol. I, p. 257.

the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals."[1]

The Rights of Man, logically considered, could not but command Burke's assent. It was the application of the principle, that seemed to him dangerous, and caused him to hold back and to talk rather of an "ancient, permanent sense of mankind," of "the judgment of the human race,"[2] as opposed to the judgment of individuals. "The pretended rights of these theorists," he says, "are all extremes: and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false."[3] To passages of this kind Mary Wollstonecraft refers, when she says: "I perceive, from the whole tenor of your Reflections, that you have a mortal antipathy to reason; but if there is anything like argument, or first principles, in your wild declamation, behold the result:—that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity, and term the unnatural customs, which ignorance and mistaken self-interest have consolidated, the sage fruit of experience."[4] She comes to the point in making her request: "Will Mr. Burke be at the trouble to inform us, how far we are to go back to discover the Rights of Man, since the light of reason is such a fallacious guide that none but fools trust to its cold investigation?"[5]

She reviews his discussion of this aspect of the subject. He speaks of the Magna Charta as our

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[1] Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France. Burke's Works, London, Bell and Daldy; 1867. Vol. II, p. 358.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 435. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 335.

[4] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 9. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

oldest reformation, but "the Magna Charta of King John, was connected with another positive Charter from Henry I., and both the one and the other, were nothing more than a re-affirmance of the still more ancient standing law of the Kingdom."[1] Englishmen thus claimed their rights as hereditary title; they asserted their liberties as an entailed inheritance, derived from their forefathers, to be transmitted to their posterity. There lies deep truth in this interpretation of history. If Burke was one-sided in banishing the speculative element from politics, the school of Revolutionists was equally one-sided in ignoring the significance of historical growth. The very demands for the Rights of Man were not a mushroom growth, but had their roots in the centuries that had passed. Mary Wollstonecraft, during this controversy, overlooks the intricate windings of these roots and rootlets. She sees in the infancy of society in England naught but lawlessness, gross prejudice and immoral superstition. If Magna Charta, she says, rests for its chief support on a former grant, which reverts to another, then chaos becomes the base of the mighty structure. Yet this chaos contained the spark, that gathered to itself fuel, until, even in her day, the mighty conflagration caused the civilized world to tremble.

If reason was never to assert itself, to bend beneath its sway existing conditions, then it was difficult to see on what principle Mr. Burke could

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[1] Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, Burke's Works, Vol. II, p. 305.

defend American independence; or how he could justify the Reformation, which tore up by the roots an old establishment. She says:

"To go further back;" "had you been a Jew, you would have joined in the cry, crucify him! --crucify him! The promulgator of a new doctrine, and the violator of old laws and customs, that not melting, like ours, into darkness and ignorance, rested on Divine authority, must have been a dangerous innovator, in your eyes, particularly if you had not been informed that the Carpenter's Son was of the stock and lineage of David."[1]

It was a peculiar turn of the argument, that Burke, who feared "that France might throw off that Christian religion, which has hitherto been our boast and comfort, and one great source of civilization amongst us and amongst many other nations,"[2] should have been asked to meet the question, which he, whose mind is bent on revolution, must ever ask of him, who frowns upon upheavals.

Burke's respect for rank could not but rouse Mary Wollstonecraft's democratic spirit. "Some decent, regulated pre-eminence," he says, "some preference given to birth, is neither unnatural, nor unjust, nor impolitic."[3] He mourned the fate of Marie Antoinette, the unfortunate queen of France; but to the poor his advice was, that they must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained, and be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. This advice Mary Wollstonecraft calls: "contemptible, hard-hearted

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 21.

[2] Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, Vol. II, p. 363. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 325.

sophistry, in the specious form of humility, and submission to the will of Heaven. "It is, Sir, possible," she says, "to render the poor happier in this world, without depriving them of the consolation, which you gratuitously grant them in the next." [1]

Rank and property go hand in hand. Burke expressed himself in favor of the one as much as of the other. "The power of perpetuating our property in our families," he says, "is one of the most valuable and interesting circumstances belonging to it, and that which tends the most to the perpetuation of society itself." [2] The desire of Englishmen to preserve the family estate, to perpetuate a name, which Burke here commends, seems to Mary Wollstonecraft a relic of barbarous, feudal institutions. In this arrangement the younger children were sacrificed to the eldest son; they were sent into exile, or confined in convents, "that they might not encroach on what was called with shameful falsehood, the family estate." [3]

Burke was proud of English customs, proud of the English constitution. It angered him to have the example of the French Republicans held out to shame British conservatives. "I wish my countrymen," he says, "rather to recommend to our neighbours the example of the British constitution than to take models from them for the improve-

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 144.

[2] Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, Vol. II, p. 324.

[3] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 46.

ment of our own."[1] "The Revolution Society has discovered that the English nation is not free,"[2] he remarks with some sarcasm. Mary Wollstonecraft meets this reproach by pointing out the insecurity of the liberty of the poor man under that "immaculate constitution." The game-laws, she mentions, as a venerable vestige of the law, that rendered the life of a deer more sacred than that of a man. She protests against the arbitrary custom of pressing men for the sea service. "You should have hinted to the French," she says, "that property in England is much more secure than liberty, and not have concealed that the liberty of an honest mechanic—his all—is often sacrificed to secure the property of the rich."[3]

It is the glaring contrast between the stately palace and the wretched hovel, that seems to her the curse of civilization. She draws an attractive picture of the farmer's hut, with its homely palings and twining woodbine; the cow grazing near that supports the children; the chubby babes feeding the cheerful poultry, and breathing the bracing air, far from the diseases and the vices of cities. And then come her questions: "Why cannot large estates be divided into small farms? Why does the brown waste meet the traveller's view, when men want work? But commons cannot be enclosed without acts of parliament to increase the property of the

[1] Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France, Vol. II, p. 516.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 328.

[3] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 25.

rich! Why might not the industrious peasant be allowed to steal a farm from the heath?[1]

Revolutionary in tone, as well as in tendency, are these demands. The demon of property, that has ever been at hand to encroach on the sacred rights of men, she claims, has rendered liberty but a fair idea, that has never yet received a form in the various governments. But fearlessly she turns to Mr. Burke: "The birthright of man, to give you, Sir, a short definition of this disputed right, is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual, with whom he is united in a social compact, and the continued existence of that compact."[2]

The nature of liberty was a theme under frequent discussion during the latter part of the eighteenth century. Rousseau's genius had made it prominent; for he emphasized strongly, that the liberty of man, in its very essence, is an inalienable possession, because it has its ever reproducing source in human nature itself. Mary Wollstonecraft, too, speaks[3] of natural rights, which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, and which, since they are received not from their forefathers, but from God, cannot be undermined by proscription.

Rousseau's teachings on the founding of states, and the sovereignty of the people were of great influence. The English Revolutionists could not disclaim their vital connection with his thought.

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Man, p. 48.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Godwin, in a note to the first chapter of his *Political Justice*, acknowledges his indebtedness to Rousseau; but also to Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Mary Wollstonecraft was in touch with the thought of both philosophers, as it had crystallized in the opinions of the day; and she had evidently made the works of both a careful study. She was well aware, that Locke had opened out paths, in which others followed. In the Introductory Chapter to her volume on the French Revolution, she gives an historical sketch of the growth of the desire among men for their rights.

> "Locke, following the track of other bold thinkers, recommended in a more methodical manner religious toleration, and analyzed the principles of civil liberty: for in his definition of liberty, we find the elements of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which in spite of the fatal errors of ignorance, and the perverse obstinacy of selfishness, is now converting sublime theories into practical truths."[1]

The volume on the French Revolution gives glimpses of a change in the mind of the author since the days, two years previously, when she engaged in the controversy with Edmund Burke. She had gone to Paris to watch with her own eyes the development of events. The king of France passed by her window to his trial. "I can scarcely tell you why," she writes in a letter to her publisher, Mr. Johnson, "but an association of ideas made the tears flow insensibly from my eyes, when I saw Louis sitting, with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach, going to meet death, where so many of his race

[1] The Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, p. 4.

have triumphed."[1] With eager interest and quick sympathies, she watched to see what use Frenchmen would make of their liberty.

"Whilst the heart sickens over a detail of crimes and follies, and the understanding is appalled by the labour of unravelling a black tissue of plots, which exhibits the human character in the most revolting point of view; it is perhaps, difficult to bring ourselves to believe, that out of this chaotic mass a fairer government is rising than has ever shed the sweets of social life on the world. But things must have time to find their level."[2]

The principle of growth in the history of nations, which she was inclined to ignore during her controversy with Burke, now meets with just appreciation in her manner of sketching the origin and progress of the French Revolution. She says:

"It was neither produced by the abilities or intrigues of a few individuals; nor was the effect of sudden and short-lived enthusiasm; but the natural consequence of intellectual improvement, gradually proceeding to perfection in the advancement of communities, from a state of barbarism to that of polished society."[3]

When in speaking of "acts of ferocious folly, which have justly brought much obloquy on the grand revolution," she says: "Yet I feel confident of being able to prove, that the people are essentially good, and that knowledge is rapidly advancing to that degree of perfectibility, when man will be considered as man, acting with the dignity of an intelligent being."[4] There is in this trust in the essential goodness of the people, a

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[1] Posthumous Works, Vol. IV, p. 93.
[2] The Origin and Progress of the French Revolution, p. 73.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. VII. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 72.

leaning toward Burke's confidence in "those inbred sentiments, which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty."[1]

Locke had maintained,[2] that when the people are made miserable, and find themselves exposed to ill-usage of arbitrary power, it will invariably happen that they will be ready to rid themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them. Mary Wollstonecraft goes further than Locke, when she considers a revolution justifiable, not only with a view to liberation from tyranny, but also because the laws and customs, which serve society in one period of development, are insufficient for the next. There lay between her days and Locke's times a century of tremendous changes, of upheavals in Europe, of upbuilding in America. In the old world existing institutions and conditions were regarded with impatience, as blocking the way of progress. In the new world a rational government was rising on new foundations, untrammelled by the antiquated laws and customs of by-gone barbarism. Americans were proud of their achievement. Their sympathies were on the side of French Republicans. Mary Wollstonecraft came in contact with Americans, who, for causes similar to those which brought her to Paris, were sojourning there. Imlay too was an American. As appears from her letters to him, she was entering gladly upon a plan of returning to America with him, to buy a farm there, and settle to the enjoyments of a home.

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[1] See p. 75.

[2] John Locke: Treatise on Civil Government, XIX, § 224.

But this was not to be. She left France and its scenes of turmoil and bloodshed, its advanced civilization and the evils attending it, to wander among the quiet hamlets of Sweden and Norway; to ponder on the state of man when he follows the dictates of his animal nature, and his reason is dormant and inactive. She came to Tonsberg in Norway, where the farmers had commenced to cut away the forests and clear the ground, because they had learned, that lumber was of value in commerce. Half a century previously, they had allowed the Dutch to take the wood, asking nothing, but that they should be paid for the labor of cutting it. Now the character of the country was being changed. The vast tracts of forest were decreasing; meadows and fields were on the increase. In their patient toil lay the development of the mental resources of the inhabitants. Mary Wollstonecraft writes:

"I never, my friend, thought so deeply of the advantages obtained by human industry as since I have been in Norway. The world requires, I see, the hand of man to perfect it; and as this task naturally unfolds the faculties he exercises, it is physically impossible that he should have remained in Rousseau's golden age of stupidity. And, considering the question of human happiness, where, oh! where does it reside? Has it taken up its abode with unconscious ignorance, or with the high-wrought mind?" [1]

She returned to England, after her brief sojourn in those northern countries, with less of the revolutionary spirit. "An ardent affection for the human race," she says in the Appendix to her *Letters from Sweden*, "makes enthusiastic

[1] Letters from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, p. 115.

characters eager to produce alteration in laws and governments prematurely." This was her attitude while in France. But now her enthusiasm was tempered by reason and intelligent observation. She adds: "To render these alterations useful and permanent, they must be the growth of each particular soil, and the gradual fruit of the ripening understanding of the nation, matured by time, not forced by an unnatural fermentation."

Her northern journey had convinced her, that this "gradual change is gaining ground;" that the grand causes, which she saw at work in France, "were carrying mankind forward;" and that ultimately, "the sum of human misery would be diminished." Hope for the future still inspired her. That noble optimism, which must ever be the mark of the reformer, was hers. Neither the glimpse of the vices and follies of the polished circles of the world, nor the sight of man but just above the brute creation, could quench the ardent desire within her, to see man in possession of all his rights.

CHAPTER V.

The Rights of Woman and Her Polemics against Writers on Female Education.

Not the impulsive expression of fervid desire for a change, but the inevitable sequence of the demand for the rights of man, the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* must be regarded as a product of the times. Mary Wollstonecraft was a child of her times, and her views with regard to the rights of man form with her the basis of her demand for the rights of woman. The same principles are applied in both cases. "If the abstract rights of man will bear discussion and explanation," she says in the Dedication of her book, "those of woman, by a parity of reasoning, will not shrink from the same test."

In her controversy with Edmund Burke, she attacked his policy of aiming at expediency, of adjusting principles to practice. The same controversy is carried over into the polemical part of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Much was written in that day concerning the education

and conduct of women. A trivial tone pervades some of the books of this kind. There were writers who resorted to satire, and in turn ridiculed or pitied women, as they endeavored to instruct them. The pages of the *Spectator*, in those days, were frequently filled with witty sallies, exposing the weaknesses of women. There were sober attempts also, of giving advice to parents and young women. Writers of this class had the avowed object of making the subordinate position of woman as endurable to her as possible under the circumstances, by advising that which seemed expedient. Edmund Burke's trust in an "ancient permanent sense of mankind," carried over into the controversy for the rights of woman, appeared in the tacit admission of writers on female education, that the instinct of the race had asserted itself in assigning to woman a subordinate place.

Though the influence of Rousseau is undoubtedly visible in some of the opinions of Mary Wollstonecraft; they are diametrically opposed to each other in their views of the nature and position of woman. He was her chief opponent. In the polemical part of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she enters upon an elaborate protest against his system. Again and again throughout her book, she finds occasion to contradict and oppose him. He had expressed with seeming logical correctness and a finished eloquence that, which was really the opinion of the civilized world, concerning the nature of woman. To disprove Rousseau, therefore, went far toward refuting the

whole false system of woman's education and position.

Rousseau, after tracing in his famous book on education, his *Emile*, which, in its day, furnished much inspiration to pedagogical research, how his pupil's character was gradually formed until he finally became a man, says:

"Thus far we have sought to educate a man in accordance with the principles of nature. In order not to leave our work incomplete, it remains to show how to educate woman, the counterpart to man. He who wishes to be guided aright, must follow the precepts of nature."[1]

He then proceeds in a truly masterly way, blending truth and sophistry, to interpret the qualities, with which nature has endowed woman. He exalts that, which he considers the work of nature; and marks as perversions the effects, which civilization has had upon woman. Later in his discussion he says: "I always come back to my guiding principle and it, without fail, offers the solution of all difficulties. I study that which is, seek the cause, and finally come to the conclusion that that which is, is right."[2] Rousseau in his investigation often loses sight of that high ideal of human character, which includes intellectual pre-eminence.

The doctrine of a return to nature, as the only way to a normal condition for human beings, found a practical application in Rousseau's *Emile.* Mary Wollstonecraft agreed with him, so far as he demanded that the unnatural distinctions of rank and wealth were to be abolished, and that ancient

[1] Rousseau: Emile V, § 25. [2] *Ibid.*, § 95.

prejudices and useless and injurious customs were to be rendered powerless. In her criticism of existing conditions, she runs parallel with Rousseau; many passages in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where she censures estrangement from nature and her laws are similar to passages in Rousseau's *Emile.* His keen observations may have stimulated her; so that in this aspect of her work, she may seem to walk in his footsteps. But when Rousseau portrays this state of nature in favor of physical well-being; and when he considers strength, health and especially self-approbation the most desirable possessions; and assigns to moral laws and ethical motives a subordinate place, Mary Wollstonecraft dissents. His thesis was: The nearer to nature, the better; while she looked forward to a higher and more perfect civilization, to be reached by means of the improvement of human reason.

In describing the education of Sophia, who was, like Emile, to remain untouched by the hand of civilization, Rousseau seeks to examine the character which nature has given to woman. His starting point is, that woman has less bodily strength than man; and that in consequence he is her master. The education of woman should therefore always be relative to man; every precept that fails to recur to this relation must necessarily run wide of the mark; for nature has ordained that she should serve him.

One of the first precepts of this system is, that care should be bestowed upon outward appearance. Rousseau describes, how girls, from their earliest

infancy are fond of dress. They show by their little airs, that they are desirous of being thought pretty; and unconsciously they realize that the physical part of the art of pleasing lies in dress. They soon become anxious to know how to dress up their dolls; and though they learn with reluctance how to read and write, they apply themselves very readily to the use of their needles. As soon as they are capable of understanding what is said to them, they are willing to be governed by the consideration of what people will think of their behaviour.

Many a protest is launched by Mary Wollstonecraft against writers, who, like Rousseau, speak of the natural fondness of women for dress, of their innate desire to please. To her these are but the outcome of perverted nature, of a false system of education. She unhesitatingly dissents from his interpretation of the hand of nature, and claims that she too has read in nature's book, and this was her result:

> "I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau. I can recollect my own feelings, and I have looked steadily around me; yet so far from coinciding with him in opinion respecting the first dawn of the female character, I will venture to affirm, that a girl, whose spirits have not been damped by inactivity, will always be a romp, and the doll will never excite attention unless confinement allows her no alternative." [1]

Brought up to please man, the riper virtues of woman are, according to Rousseau, to be of a nature to render her useful and convenient for man.

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 81.

The first and most important qualification in a woman, he says, is good-nature or sweetness of temper. An habitual restraint should be exercised over her, so that a tractableness may result, for which woman has occasion; since during her whole life she remains under subjection either to man, or to the opinions of mankind. But in making her tractable, she should not be made unhappy. It is not necessary to make her dependence burdensome, but only to let her feel it. Rousseau advises, that she should be allowed to "exempt herself from the necessity of obeying." Subtilty should even be cultivated, as a talent natural to the sex; for he thinks every natural inclination is good and right.

Mary Wollstonecraft admits that "formed to live with such an imperfect being as man, women ought to learn, from the exercise of their faculties, the necessity of forbearance."[1] But she questions whether a state of dependence is natural to them. "Considering the length of time that women have been dependent," she says, "is it surprising that some of them hug their chains?"[2] She quotes a naturalist as saying: "These dogs at first kept their ears erect; but custom has superseded nature, and a token of fear is become a beauty." By this observation she meets Rousseau on his own ground. When he claims that women ought to have but little liberty, because they are apt to indulge themselves excessively in what is allowed them, she again meets him with a parallel case: "Slaves and

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 136. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

mobs have always indulged themselves in the same excesses, when once they broke loose from authority. The bent bow recoils with violence, when the hand is suddenly relaxed that forcibly held it." [1] As for calling subtilty a talent peculiar to women, she insists that "greatness of mind can never dwell with cunning," and that if any class of mankind be so created, that it must necessarily be educated by rules not strictly deducible from truth, virtue is an affair of convention. Woman, according to Rousseau, should be kept in a state of moral inferiority. Where does he rank her intellectually?

She is to know but little, and the little she knows is to be of a nature pleasing to man. She should ever have in mind the question: How will your discourse be received? Reason in women is a practical reason, says Rousseau, capacitating them artfully to discover the means of attaining a known end, but which would never enable them to discover that end itself. As the conduct of women is subservient to public opinion, their faith in matters of religion should, for that very reason, be subject to authority. The wife ought to be of the same religion as her husband; for though such religion might be false, that docility which induces her to submit to the order of nature, takes away, in the sight of God, the criminality of error. It is not so needful to explain to them the reasons for their belief, as to lay down precisely the tenets they are to believe. After thus cramping woman's intellec-

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 135.

tual powers, and checking the growth of character, he advises her to reflect, that a reflecting man may not yawn in her company!

Rousseau's argument was, to a degree, consistent, provided his thesis, that nature formed woman for man, was granted. But Mary Wollstonecraft touched its weakest spot, when she pointed out, that the sacrifice of woman's mental and moral development, which is involved in this system, served but for a short time. According to Rousseau's interpretation, nature gives but a slight degree of permanency to a relation, which religion and ethics make almost absolutely binding. His system, as here becomes apparent, may justly be regarded as lacking a moral basis. It is difficult to conceive of precepts more degrading to woman, than those set forth by the "Apostle of Nature," as Rousseau has been called. Mary Wollstonecraft rightly asks, why a girl should be educated for her husband with the same care as for an Eastern harem; why the important years of youth, the usefulness of age, and the rational hopes of futurity should be sacrificed to render her an object of desire for a short time. Her rationalism was intensely antagonistic to a system that magnified the physical aspects of human life, and hopelessly cramped the faculty of reason in one-half of the human race. She considered the unfolding of reason the chief end in life; and believed that it is the right of man to seek to attain this end. Rousseau denied this right to woman. His system of necessity called forth her fierce opposition.

Rousseau's doctrine was as dangerous as it was pernicious. Set forth with a finished eloquence, he gave what seemed to be a philosophical basis to the corruptions of his time. Mary Wollstonecraft detected the poison in the crystal cup. It must have been of an alluring nature in her day; for those who look for the cause of the tragedies of her later life, find, that a drop of the poison passed her lips. Yet in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* she speaks forth the indignation of a sober-minded Englishwoman, and arraigns one of Rousseau's most distinguished countrywomen, because, far from sharing her indignation, she pleads his cause. The Baroness de Staël in her Eulogium on Rousseau, grants his pardon; though he denies woman reason, shuts her out from knowledge and turns her aside from truth, simply because his admiration for woman, as nature formed her, amounts almost to adoration. What signifies it, the Baroness de Staël argues, to women, that his reason disputes with them the empire, when his heart is devotedly theirs. That she and other women should thus unite with men in adopting sentiments, that had the direct tendency of degrading them, calls forth Mary Wollstonecraft's scorn.

One of her own countrywomen, Mrs. Piozzi, known specially by her literary relations to Dr. Johnson, reasoned after the same fashion as the Baroness de Staël. The contempt with which men, in that day, treated woman's understanding, seemed to her a slight grievance. She was convinced, however, that not a woman could be found, who

would contradict the assertion, that "all our attainments, all our arts are employed to gain and keep the heart of man; and what mortification can exceed the disappointment, if the end be not obtained?" [1] If Mrs. Piozzi's estimate of the women of her times was to any degree correct, Mary Wollstonecraft had little encouragement in pleading for the rights of reason in behalf of women.

Madame Genlis, a prominent pedagogical writer of her day, is taken to task by Mary Wollstonecraft for error in another direction. The books of Madame Genlis were numerous, and were widely read. She sought to uphold the power of the Roman Catholic Church and of the aristocracy; and carried her respect for authority into her educational views by insisting on blind obedience to the will of parents. An accomplished young woman, according to Madame Genlis, is ready to marry anybody, whom her mother is pleased to recommend. So rigid are the lines drawn by her, that she insists that "a well-educated girl has not time to be in love."

It might perhaps seem as if the spirit of criticism had taken hold of Mary Wollstonecraft and blinded her to the merits of other writers. But this was not the case. In mentioning Mrs. Chapone's Letters, she indicates, that she cannot always coincide in opinion with her; but this does not affect her respect for the writer. Words of great esteem are bestowed by her upon the memory of Mrs. Macaulay, the famous author of a History of

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 160.

England, who, in possession of an unusual degree of knowledge and talent, had been remarkable among her contemporaries for her conflict with the atheistical and sceptical tendencies of her times. The approbation of this great woman Mary Wollstonecraft expected, when she first thought of writing her book; but soon heard with deep regret that she was no more. She called attention to the fact, that sufficient respect had not been paid to the memory of Mrs. Macaulay.

In the light of this noble tribute, which frees Mary Wollstonecraft from the suspicion of undue eagerness to condemn, it is all the more surprising to see how she challenges writers of her own and past times. Lord Chesterfield was among them. Pope and Milton are attacked, the latter because in his *Paradise Lost* Eve says to Adam:

> "My author and disposer, what thou bidst
> Unargued I obey; so God ordains;
> God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more
> Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise."

Perhaps the most daring part of her polemics is her bold attack upon Dr. Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters* and Dr. Fordyce's *Sermons to Young Women.* Both were popular writers, who had a large circle of readers; and whose views were in harmony with the current opinions of the day. Of Dr. Fordyce's sermons[1] she says: "They have long made a part of a young woman's library; nay, girls at school are allowed to read them, yet," she

[1] Rev. James Fordyce, D.D. Sermons to Young Women, 1762. 2 Volumes. Many Editions.

adds, "I should not allow girls to peruse them, unless I designed to hunt every spark of nature out of their composition, melting every human quality into female meekness and artificial grace." She objects to the lover-like phrases, with which a grave preacher should not embellish his discourse. He addresses "the British fair, the fairest of the fair, as if they had only feelings," and makes florid appeals to Heaven, and to "the beauteous innocents, the fairest images of Heaven here below."

Dr. Fordyce proceeds from the same proposition that forms the basis of Rousseau's argument: Woman is created for man. Her character is to be one of yielding softness and gentle compliance. He would not justify men in anything wrong on their part, but is astonished at the folly of many women, who complain of the indifference of their husbands. He tells them:

> "Had you behaved to them with more respectful observance, and a more equal tenderness, studying their humours, overlooking their mistakes, submitting to their opinions in matters indifferent, passing by little instances of unevenness, caprice or passion, giving soft answers to hasty words, complaining as seldom as possible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties, to enlighten the hour of dulness, and call up the ideas of felicity: had you pursued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even increased their esteem, so far as to have secured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue or your mutual satisfaction, and your home might at this day have been the abode of domestic bliss."[1]

Not a trace of the human character does Mary Wollstonecraft find in a woman according to this description; she is simply a domestic drudge, whose

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 152.

being is absorbed in that of a tyrant. Moreover, she thinks Dr. Fordyce must have had very little acquaintance with the human heart, if he really supposed that such conduct would bring back wandering love, instead of exciting contempt.

It is true that there is little apparent difference between the advice given by Rousseau and that of Dr. Fordyce; and yet, there is a distinction. An interest in the well-being of woman is displayed in Dr. Fordyce's advice, that is absent in Rousseau's. The sentiment of the Church, which Dr. Fordyce voices, has an ethical aspect that is foreign to the sentiments of the "Apostle of Nature." The advice of the Church was to the servant to be obedient to his master, to woman to submit herself to her own husband. Meekness, gentleness, the bearing of injuries without retaliation, were virtues extolled by the founder of the Christian religion. Men in the early days of Christianity frequently laid aside their courage and strength and assumed the garb of meekness, which their master had worn. Side by side with this spirit of self-renunciation, there dwelt in the new religion an appreciation of the intrinsic value of the individual, as an object of salvation, and a broad conception of liberty as the product of faith, that sent its waves of influence along the course of the history of the nations.

The Greek first conceived the idea of the freedom of the individual.[1] But man is free, meant to him: The Greek is free; the slave and the bar-

[1] See Wilhelm Preger: Entfaltung der Idee des Menschen durch die Weltgeschichte. München, 1870.

barian were not included. Christianity ushered into the world principles, according to which the slave and woman, the conquered and the wretched were placed on the same footing with the strongest and the mightiest, so far as the highest spiritual gifts which the religion of Christ had to offer, were concerned. And these principles, combined with the Anglo-Saxon love of active independence, are destined ultimately to vindicate to all the right of personal freedom. But meantime Dr. Fordyce represents those who preached that which seemed expedient, and gave but a faint reflection of the true relation which Christianity bears to woman.

Another passage in Dr. Fordyce's sermons, quoted by Mary Wollstonecraft seems a curious mixture of religious sentiment and ill-advised flattery. Dr. Fordyce says:

> "Never, perhaps, does a fine woman strike more deeply than when, composed into pious recollection, and possessed with the noblest considerations, she assumes, without knowing it, superior dignity and new graces; so that the beauties of holiness seem to radiate about her, and the bystanders are almost induced to fancy her already worshipping amongst her kindred angels!"

Mary Wollstonecraft asks, "Why are women to be thus bred up with a desire of conquest? the very word, used in this sense, gives me a sickly qualm! Do religion and virtue offer no stronger motives, no brighter reward?"

Even in perversions, as great as the above passage by Dr. Fordyce, a deep truth may be found hidden somewhere. The Church has ever had in woman a mighty ally to keep the flame of piety

bright in a community; and piety in turn exalted woman; for there is something in man that responds to a visible token of communion between one of his kind and his Creator.

> "Where the husband's attention is wholly absorbed by the struggle for daily bread, the only aspirations, frequently, that are left to the family, are those of a religious nature, and they are nourished by the wife. A deep sense of piety, that centres in the mother of the family is often the best safeguard of morality." [1]

This too is conquest; not the conquest of men's hearts, by youth and beauty with the aid of religious devotion; but the conquest of the hearts of her family by the mother, who can thus best guard her charge against its foes. It is the perversion of truth that forms the butt of the attacks of the revolutionists. Mary Wollstonecraft valued most highly the religious aspirations of which man is capable. To see them given a place with other accomplishments, that please the eyes of men, rightly roused her opposition.

Free from flattery, and filled with a loving regard for the welfare of his daughters, who had lately lost their mother, Dr. Gregory's *Legacy to his Daughters* [2] is a touching instance of the vacillation of opinion, which must inevitably have been the state of mind of an affectionate father in those days. Dr. Gregory feared the consequence of instilling sentiments, that might draw his daughters out of

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[1] Wundt: Die Ethik, p. 534.

[2] John Gregory, M. D. "A Father's Legacy to his Daughters," 1774. Many editions. The last in 1877.

the track of common life, without enabling them to act with consonant independence and dignity. In the preface he tells them a mournful truth, "that they will hear, at least once in their lives, the genuine sentiments of a man, who has no interest in deceiving them." Mary Wollstonecraft exclaims:

"Hapless woman! what can be expected from thee when the beings on whom thou art said naturally to depend for reason and support, have all an interest in deceiving thee? This is the root of the evil that has shed a corroding mildew on all thy virtues; and blighting in the bud thy opening faculties, has rendered thee the weak thing thou art! It is this separate interest, this insiduous state of warfare, that undermines morality and divides mankind!"[1]

The very parental solicitude with which Dr. Gregory would mould the conduct of his daughters, shows forth in bold lines the deceptive character of his advice. If girls possessed strength and vigor, they should conceal it, lest men suppose that they were not entirely dependent on their protection for safety. "Be even cautious," he says, "in displaying your good sense. But if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and a cultivated understanding." Men of real merit, Dr. Gregory afterwards observes, are superior to this meanness. "Where is the necessity," demands Mary Wollstonecraft, "that the behaviour of the whole sex should be modulated to please men, who, having little claim to respect as individuals, choose to keep close in their pha-

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 154.

lanx?"[1] Marriage was to be the chief end of existence, yet on no account should it be apparent, that a young woman's thoughts were bent in this direction. A wife should keep her husband in ignorance concerning the extent of her affection, so that uncertainty might prove an attraction. This tangle of dissimulations and pretences Mary Wollstonecraft brushes aside with the sound advice: "Make the heart clean, and give the head employment, and I will venture to predict that there will be nothing offensive in the behaviour."

Notwithstanding the popularity, which Dr. Gregory's book enjoyed, even down to recent times, some of his contemporaries were alive to the defects of the book and the system it sets forth. One of Mary Wollstonecraft's severest critics agrees with her on one point, that Dr. Gregory's *Legacy* shows that "his system of female excellence was formed in consequence of confined views, and a state of society, neither the best nor the most eligible."[2] But while granting all that can be said against this book and against the wisdom of its author, yet the father who speaks through its pages is not an isolated example, but is a type of many a parent, who wavered and hesitated, fearing that in his most earnest effort to advance the best welfare of his daughter, he might unfit her for the world in which she lived. Mary Wollstonecraft faced the practical aspect of the question some years after her denunciation of Dr. Gregory's book, when the happi-

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 155.
[2] The Critical Review, June 1792, p. 132.

ness of her little daughter, Fanny, lay very close to her heart. She wrote to the father of her child:

"You know that as a woman I am particularly attached to her, I feel more than a mother's fondness and anxiety, when I reflect on the dependent and oppressed state of her sex. I dread lest she should be forced to sacrifice her heart to her principles, or principles to her heart. With trembling hand I shall cultivate sensibility, and cherish delicacy of sentiment, lest, while I lend fresh blushes to the rose, I sharpen the thorns that will wound the breast I would fain guard. I dread to unfold her mind, lest it should render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit. Hapless woman! What a fate is thine!"[1]

There is a note of sad resignation in this letter, a tacit admission that existing conditions are more powerful than the individual who wages war against them. She says with reference to Dr. Gregory: "Surely it would have been wiser to have advised women to improve themselves till they rose above the fumes of vanity; and then to let the public opinion come round, for where are rules of accommodation to stop?"[2] But public opinion generally moves slowly. It is conservative in its nature. She, who dares to outrun it, must needs pay the penalty.

The problem was passing through a natural process of solution at the time when Mary Wollstonecraft was writing her book, fearlessly facing an array of writers, who if not mighty, were yet numerous and influential; and when, a few years later, she shrank with the dread prompted by her love from bringing up her own daughter in the way which she had advocated so unhesitatingly.

[1] Letters from Norway, etc., p. 66.

[2] Rights of Woman, p. 155.

Mary Wollstonecraft looked to France as the country, where the rights of women would first receive consideration. Not France, but those newly settled colonies in America proved to be the place, where there was that absence of coercion, which she desired. "Let there be then no coercion established in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places." [1]

The opinions, which the settlers carried away with them as their heritage from the home of their fathers had to pass the test of stern realities, when they came to seek for daily bread in an unsettled country. The ballast of perversions, concerning life and its meanings, savouring of an over-wrought, time-worn civilization, had to be cast overboard in the face of relentless necessity. The old doctrine, which Mary Wollstonecraft seemed to fight single-handed, that woman was created to please man, could not take root, where woman ranged herself by the side of man, to make a home where but lately primeval forests had covered the soil. Women had been burden-bearers from time immemorial. There was nothing new in this aspect of the character of the American woman of those early days. The new feature lay in the fact, that men and women had fled from oppression, with the hope of building up a state, where the rights of men would be guarded. Such an atmosphere was conducive to a respect for the rights of

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[1] Rights of Woman, Dedication.

women and offered opportunities to women to claim their rights.

Dr. Fordyce and Dr. Gregory have had their day; for the reader of the present time lays aside their books with a smile of wonder, not of contempt; for the race must work its way into the light of truth after its own fashion. Mary Wollstonecraft's hand aimed a powerful stroke at the system that had worn itself threadbare. She eminently proved herself endowed with the courage of the reformer; for she set her own opinion over against that of most of her contemporaries, and, inspired with a firm belief in its soundness, she dealt blow after blow, to destroy the false foundation and make way for the upbuilding of the rights of woman on the same basis as the rights of man.

CHAPTER VI.

Her investigation of the causes of Woman's intellectual inferiority.

Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* demands for woman, as a rational being, a place by the side of man, with equality of rights and privileges. True to the spirit of the Revolutionary School, she makes these demands on the ground of abstract principles; yet abstractions are of little value where realities speak against them. The facts of the past and present seemed to indicate, that woman's position had ever been subordinate to that of man; and that thus far, woman had not given evidence of ability to rank with man, whether regarded according to physical, ethical or intellectual standard. It was therefore a very essential part of her undertaking, to prove that this subordination was merely a result of education and circumstances and did not have its source in a natural inferiority of the sex. If she failed to prove this, her demands were without foundation; for she could not claim equal

rights for those, who did not at least possess the potentiality of equality.

She admits throughout, that woman has less physical strength than man; nor does she seem to entertain the hope, that education can essentially alter this divergency. She says: "In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male. This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favor of woman."[1] But she does protest against the prejudices of her times, that led men to think bodily strength inimical to the character of a gentleman; and seemed to women to "take from their feminine graces and from that lovely weakness, the source of their undue power."[2] She tells of a woman of fashion, whom she had known, who thought "a distinguishing taste and a puny appetite the height of all human perfection." "I have seen this weak, sophisticated being neglect all the duties of life, yet recline with self-complacency on a sofa, and boast of her want of appetite, as a proof of delicacy that extended to, or, perhaps arose from her exquisite sensibility."[3] With these perversions of her times Mary Wollstonecraft had no patience. She claimed that by their mode of dress, the nature of their employment, the rules of etiquette and by their whole education women have been rendered artificial beings, who are not even in possession of that

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 32. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

smaller share of physical strength, which atuern has allotted to them. If women would but lead rational lives, they would have sufficient strength to engage in various activities, to support themselves and thus to enjoy a life of usefulness and independence.

Physical superiority is a noble prerogative and has its far-reaching effects even into the realm of the mental and moral activities. A dependence of spirit is frequently bred by physical weakness, that proves a most effectual check upon a full display of mental resources and that firmness of character that lead to success. Mary Wollstonecraft says: "I will allow that bodily strength seems to give man a natural superiority over woman, and this is the only solid basis on which the superiority of the sex can be built."[1] It may be argued that if woman must depend upon man to encounter with his superior strength the harsh vicissitudes of life; if he is the one to meet danger and to stand between the world and his family as its protector, then he has claim to certain rights, from which he may exclude woman. Responsible position is never without its peculiar rights. This is true to some extent; yet it is also true, that it is not in the end physical force, but intellect that governs. Man's superior physical strength may meet the brunt of pressure from without, while at the same time the moral and intellectual force, that keeps him at the front, is furnished by the female

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 75.

members of the household. "There have been many women in the world," says Mary Wollstonecraft, "who, instead of being supported by the reason and virtue of their fathers and brothers, have strengthened their own minds by struggling with their vices and follies." [1]

The onward tread of science during the present century has had marked effect upon this aspect of Mary Wollstonecraft's argument. Writers cannot to-day speak of woman as a "fair defect in nature." [2] The position which Mary Wollstonecraft deplored of being denied equality with man, yet not belonging to the brutes, is undermined; for no one to-day speaks of woman in her normal condition, as a being physically inferior to man; weaker in some respects she may be and differently constituted, but not inferior. Mary Wollstonecraft reasoned in her day unaided by much of the valuable material, that empiric science now offers as a foundation to the deductions of the philosopher. Biology unfolds the secrets of life; and the theory of evolution, which has revolutionized some aspects of thought during the present century, renders the trivial teaching of a century ago out of place. Nor does the abstruse terminology of the man of science keep the general facts, with which he deals, from finding their way into the common opinions of the day.

Researches in the direction of Anthropology during the past few decades have had a similar

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 148. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

effect. One of the tenets of common belief in Mary Wollstonecraft's day was, that woman had ever been held in a condition subject to man. She also reckons with this assertion as a known factor in her argument. The investigations of Bachofen, Morgan, Lippert and others during the present century, in the direction of the Matriarchate, indicate that history, from antiquity down to the present time, shows distinct traces of a condition of society, in which the mother is the center of the joint family and the governing head. Among certain races the matriarchal family preceded the patriarchal family. These researches belong to our own times; and it seems a return to barren soil with scant fruitage to regard Mary Wollstonecraft, with her feet firmly planted on, the one stretch of undisputed territory, the human reason.

Descartes, after emerging from a sea of doubt, had come to an indisputable point, his *Cogito, ergo sum*, and from this point his argument proceeded. Mary Wollstonecraft started from a similar point. Woman is in possession of reason, she argued. Reason is an emanation of divinity, the tie that connects the creature with the Creator, and must therefore in its nature be the same in all, though varying in the strength and perceptibility with which it becomes manifest in individuals. It follows, that since reason in its nature is the same in all, knowledge and virtue must be of the same nature in all, and with this conclusion principles of expediency are denied the right to control the kind of knowledge which woman

should seek and the nature of the virtues which she should make her own. Teachers of female excellence are brushed aside; every thing is thrown open to woman, nothing can be withheld; for she is a rational being. Taken by itself, this conclusion is that of one-sided rationalism. Taken in connection with Mary Wollstonecraft's wise word: "Let there be then no coercion established in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing the sexes will fall into their proper places,"[1] it is evident, that reason was but to serve as the hinge, on which the door to liberty was to swing open.

But would women avail themselves of the rights, which reason opened out before them? Those of the sex, who were forced by pressure of circumstances to strain their ability to the utmost, in order to provide the necessities of life for themselves and others, had Mary Wollstonecraft's full appreciation. She did not deal with women of this kind; nor with the exceptional woman. Her attention was fixed upon that large majority of women, who, in accordance with the social arrangements of the civilized world, were supported by their fathers or husbands and, dependent as they were, were twice fettered by the wish of him who supported them, and by the iron law of public opinion. In her descriptions of the condition of the woman of her times, in her appeals to arise and shake off the unworthy yoke, and in her demand for a revolution in female manners, there is a rare mingling of psycho-

[1] Dedication to the Rights of Woman.

logical insight into the causes of social evils and the reformer's righteous indignation at the weakness of human nature.

Gathering together the scattered threads of her argument, the first cause of woman's subordinate position, as unfolded by her, may be given as follows: Man, in order to maintain the ascendancy which his physical strength gives to him, needs superiority of reason, in order to make his rulership permanent and secure. Weakness, with its consequent yielding, is therefore far more pleasing to him, than that rational independence, which is a necessary accompaniment of equality. Woman, on the other hand, is satisfied by the homage which she receives from man, and does not find it necessary by the application of all her faculties to earn for herself that respect, which one human being desires to receive from another. And as the helpless loveliness of women induces man most readily to "lend his reason to guide their tottering steps aright,"[1] weakness virtually becomes an attraction and the impulse to all higher aspirations receives a deadly check. This, Mary Wollstonecraft considered the first cause of woman's inferiority, the effects she found everywhere apparent.

The etiquette of society illustrated the peculiar attitude of men toward women. Men thought it manly to pay those trivial attentions, with which they in reality insultingly supported their own

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 218.

superiority. "It is not condescension," says Mary Wollstonecraft, "to bow to an inferior. So ludicrous, in fact, do these ceremonies appear to me" she says, "that I scarcely am able to govern my muscles, when I see a man start with eager and serious solicitude to lift a handkerchief or shut a door, when the lady could have done it herself, had she only moved a pace or two."[1] She earnestly wished that the distinction of sex might cease to exist in society, unless where love animates the behaviour. It seemed to her as if men tried, by these trivialities, to compensate women for the loss of important advantages; and women, blinded by the show of respect, played the role of queens as long as possible, instead of insisting upon the more noble social forms, dictated by equality.

It was but natural that women should desire position and honor; the craving for the love and respect of members of the race is inherent in human nature. The perversion lies in the way in which this desire is gratified. Mary Wollstonecraft's opposition to class privileges here found its application to women; for as a class, she says, they are born in possession of certain privileges. Hard-working women of the laboring classes were above the reproach, which fell upon women of the higher classes, who considered homage and flattery their due, not because they had done anything to deserve it, but because they were women. They expected consideration and respect to be paid them,

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 100.

not as a well-earned right, but because they were accustomed to seeing it gratuitously granted; hence the evils which always follow the use of advantages obtained without exertion were visited upon them. Their ready acceptance of privileges, which were not the result of exertion, did not however display a species of weakness peculiar to the sex; but simply showed that their moral fibre was neither more nor less tense than that of the men whose lives were cast in similar moulds. Mary Wollstonecraft classes them with the rich and quotes from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, whose description of the character of the rich she finds equally applicable to that of women. As an observation on human nature, she remarks: "Birth, riches, and every extrinsic advantage that exalt a man above his fellows, without any mental exertion, sink him in reality below them." [1]

A woman of sensibility was the ideal woman in Mary Wollstonecraft's day. She quotes a writer as saying, that "woman's power is her sensibility." Naturally women regarded the means of increasing this power as the most important question of their lives. They employed their time with novels, music, poetry and gallantry; all their thoughts turned on subjects calculated to excite emotion. The result was that peculiar female character, which, as Mary Wollstonecraft told her contemporaries, could scarcely be called a human character. She described it as possessing neither harmony nor stability; for the imagination was heated and the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

feelings rendered fastidious; the understanding was neglected, and since feeling predominated when reason should rule, the opinions wavered and conduct was unstable. A strange character, it is true, but poets depicted it with attractive coloring, and men yielded admiringly to its sway.

Who shall say that this character belongs entirely to the women of a century ago? The causes that produced it have by no means disappeared; the effects must continue their existence, though in a somewhat altered form. Bebel, in his widely circulated book on the relation of woman to socialism, describes female character in almost the same language used by Mary Wollstonecraft. Where she uses the word sensibility, Bebel employs the German word *Gemüth*. Sensibility, defined as "the capacity of the soul to exercise, or to be the subject of emotion or feeling, as distinguished from the intellect and will," has its equivalent in the German *Gemüth*. And when Bebel complains, that in the education of women too much emphasis is laid upon *Vertiefung des Gemüths*,[1] he gives expression to one of the chief contentions of Mary Wollstonecraft. Dr. Johnson's definition of sensibility as "quickness of sensation; quickness of perception; delicacy;" gives to her no other idea than that of most exquisitely polished instinct. "I discern," she says, "not a trace of the image of God in either sensation or matter. Refined seventy times seven, they are still material; intellect dwells not there;

[1] August Bebel: Die Frau und der Socialismus, Stuttgart, 1895. 24. Auflage.

nor will fire ever make lead gold."[1] Ever consistent in her pronounced rationalism, she seems to overlook here the fact that sensibility too has its place. Her contention was against exaggerated sensibility; perhaps she could not afford to lessen the force of her argument by pointing out, that an absence of sensibility is also to be deplored.

In the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding was always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment. Girls were therefore expected to dedicate a great part of their time to needlework; yet, this employment contracted their faculties more than any other that could have been chosen for them, by confining their thoughts to their persons. Men ordered their clothes to be made and had done with the subject; women often made their own clothes and were continually talking about them. It was not the making of necessaries that weakened the mind, but what Mary Wollstonecraft calls "the frippery of dress."[2]

The straight path to the store-house of knowledge was closed to women. They were not admitted to serious scientific study, and if they had natural sagacity it was turned too soon on life and manners. They frequently went into society, and soon acquired a certain knowledge of human nature; but this too was of a superficial kind, rather the result of sheer observation on real life than the outcome of comparison between that, which has

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 108. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 125.

been individually observed and the results of experience generalized by speculation. They dwelt on effects and modifications, without tracing them back to causes. The complicated rules to adjust behaviour became the weak substitute for simple principles. In the absence of that sound reasoning, which forms the basis of morality, women cultivated a ready tact, to guide their steps. Instinctively they found their way, and this faculty was admired as one of the charming aspects of female character. Mary Wollstonecraft did not look upon it in that light. She regarded it as a faculty cultivated by woman under stress of the necessity upon her.

To prove this, she cited the example of military men. They too were sent into the world before their minds had been stored with knowledge or fortified by principles. The consequences were similar. Soldiers acquired a little superficial knowledge, snatched from the muddy current of conversation; and by continually mixing with society, they gained, what is termed, a knowledge of the world. If they had any sense, it was a kind of instinctive glance, that catches proportions and decides with respect to manners, but fails when arguments are to be pursued below the surface, or opinions analyzed. Where was then the difference, when the education had been the same? Yet soldiers did not lose their rank in the distinction of sexes; for they were still reckoned superior to women, though in what their superiority consisted, it was difficult to discover. This comparison found much favor in the eyes of contemporary critics

and was thought witty and to the point. It was an ingenious attempt at proving that the distinctions of sex do not enter the realms of mind.

Mary Wollstonecraft refused to admit that there is any inherent difference in the mental proclivities of man and woman. That oft-repeated observation, that man is swayed by thought, woman by feeling, and that by the intermingling of both, harmonious completeness ensues, seemed to her but the entering-wedge to argument, that ended in completely separating the mental functions, and culminated in comparing women to angels. But as only young women were compared with angels, the comparison was proven unsound. Any attempt at separation seemed to end in anomalous position. As Mary Wollstonecraft frequently reiterates: Woman has always been either slave or tyrant. She is either considered to move in a sphere above man, to which he looks up in worshipping attitude, as to a being of entirely different nature; or else she is thought incapable of reason, and as having her place somewhere between man and the brute creation.

It cannot however be said that Mary Wollstonecraft has proven that the nature of sex does not in some way affect the functions of the mind. To attempt such proof would have been inconsistent with the rationalistic basis of her argument; for reason must be the same in all. A poetical admirer of Mary Wollstonecraft's genius, who reproduced in verse, what she had maintained; but whose poetry was less poetical than occasional passages

of her prose, voiced her leading sentiment in the following couplet:

> "'Twixt mind and mind, then say, ye learned and wise,
> In what and where the sexual difference lies?" [1]

But is there no intrinsic difference between the powers of mind displayed by man, and those of woman? Is all the apparent divergency merely due to outward circumstances? Mrs. Shelley, the gifted daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, writes in her later years: "My belief is, whether there be sex in souls or not, that the sex of our material mechanism makes us quite different creatures, better though weaker, but wanting in the higher grades of intellect."[2] Godwin, in sketching the leading traits of Mary Wollstonecraft's intellectual character, draws a comparison between her mental powers and his own, that is of peculiar interest in this connection. Of himself he says:

> "One of the leading passions of my mind has been an anxious desire not to be deceived. This has led me to view the topics of my reflection on all sides; and to examine and re-examine without end, the questions that interest me. I have been stimulated, as long as I can remember, by an ambition for intellectual distinction; but as long as I can remember, I have been discouraged, when I have endeavored to cast the sum of my intellectual value, by finding that I did not possess, in the degree of some other men, an intuitive perception of intellectual beauty."

"What I wanted in this respect," he continues, "Mary possessed, in a degree superior to any other person I ever knew."

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[1] "A Poetical Epistle addressed to Miss Wollstonecraft. Occasioned by reading her celebrated Essay on the Rights of Woman." By John Henry Colls. London, 1795.

[2] Mrs. J. Marshall: The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 1889, Vol. II, p. 269.

"The strength of her mind lay in intuition. She was often right, by this means only, in matters of mere speculation. She adopted one opinion, and rejected another, spontaneously, by a sort of tact, and the force of a cultivated imagination; and yet, though perhaps, in the strict sense of the term, she reasoned little, it is surprising what a degree of soundness is to be found in her determinations. In a robust and unwavering judgment of this sort, there is a kind of witchcraft; when it decides justly, it produces a responsive vibration in every ingenuous mind. In this sense, my oscillation and scepticism were fixed by her boldness."[1]

This contrast, pointed out by Godwin, is generally thought characteristic of man and woman. Man is said to reach his conclusions by the slow process of logical reasoning, while woman takes a shorter road, led by an unerring instinct, which some designate intuition. But intuitive perception is not to be confounded with that instinctive glance of the proportion of things, which women are said to possess. Spinoza distinguishes between three kinds of knowledge: That which is attained through opinions or perceptions; that which is the product of reason; and that which is intuitive. The last he considers the highest, for it seeks to explore the nature of things.[2] Genius has its home amid intuitive perceptions; and the idea, that comes spontaneously and unlooked-for, passes the threshold of the unconscious to the conscious as an intuition. But the idea, if born in the artists' mind, demands industry and skill of execution, before it can be of value to the human race; if it is a gift to the scientist, it

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, London, 1798, p. 197.

[2] Spinoza: Ethica. Part II. Proposition 41.

is but the beginning of a long process of laborious experiments, before it can even be called a discovery; and in the same way, the speculative mind may see clearly as with an eagle's eye; yet if discursive thought is lacking, carefully to mark the steps that lead to a demonstration of the truth, this power of intellectual sight, as a fresh source of knowledge, is lost to the world.

Though it may perhaps be said, that women are in possession of intuitive powers of mind, if not to as great a degree, yet with a greater number of instances, than is the case with men, they certainly have been lacking in that patient plodding of reason, that converts the new-found thought into a real acquisition to the treasure-house of human knowledge. On the other hand, it has undoubtedly often been the case, that women have uttered a thought, which men have made their own, which they have worked out and given to the world, unconscious, perhaps, that they have merely decked out an idea which another furnished.

Hartmann claims that women are closer to the *Unconscious*, *i.e.*, to the ultimate ground of existence, than men. Woman is to man, he says, as instinctive, unconscious action is to reasonable or conscious action. He is therefore not in favor of a movement, which is to make women like unto men, so far as the training and application of reason is concerned; though according to his philosophy, the intuitive perceptions, which the mind draws from the *Unconscious*, are utilized in behalf of

the human race, only as they pass through a process of close reasoning and demonstration. He would see woman retain her place as a tie, that aids the connection between man and that ultimate ground of existence, which he calls the *Unconscious*.[1] Thus German Pessimism has found new cause why woman should be denied the rights of reason; not in this case to gratify individual man, as in Mary Wollstonecraft's days, but for the good of the race.

An explanation on psychological grounds is offered by Dr. G. Simmel.[2] As the body of woman resembles more that of a child, and is less differentiated than that of man, so her mental proclivities, her preferences and activities are gathered more closely about a center, and present an existence less specialized and independent. He defines feeling as the sum of infinitely minute conceptions. Where, as in the case of woman, feeling predominates, any single conception has little opportunity to rise into prominence, by reason of the infinite number of conceptions crowded together. The whole receives attention rather than the parts; the result is considered rather than the factors; a decision is reached without dwelling on the reasons that lead to it. This is the contrast between feeling and conscious thought. Man's mental activities are more differentiated; he reaches a logical conclusion by slow process. Woman

[1] E. Von Hartmann: Philosophie des Unbewussten, Abschnitt. B. Capitel xi.

[2] Dr. G. Simmel: Zur Psychologie der Frauen. Zeitschrift für Völker Psychologie. Band xx. 1890.

arrives at her conclusions with great rapidity, simply because the abundance of conceptions do not call forth searching thought, but yield their decision as by an impulse. Development in the case of women would thus lie in the direction of greater differentiation, which implies training that would decrease the tendency to feeling and increase the realm of reason. This theory seems much in harmony with the whole tenor of Mary Wollstonecraft's argument.

The solution of this question cannot be reached until after women, for a number of generations, have had perfect freedom to cultivate their powers as they will. If the needs of the race continue to demand of the majority of women a development of mental functions, not of close resemblance to those of men, they will not therefore be considered intellectually inferior. Uniformity is not to be gained at the cost of that healthful diversity which perhaps nature intended. Mary Wollstonecraft's proposition that reason must be the same in all, does not to-day require proof. The nature of reason is the same in man and woman, but the work which the world requires of them may not, in some of its aspects, be the same, and may therefore determine shades of difference in the development of mental resources. It is the problem of the future to give free scope to the intellectual activities of all, to break the fetters which the distinctions of sex have laid upon the mental life of women, and thus to utilize in behalf of the race the diversity of natural endowment.

CHAPTER VII.

Her Discussion of Woman's Moral Inferiority.

The moral inferiority of women was to Mary Wollstonecraft, in her day, as apparent as their intellectual inferiority. In pointing out the causes, that left the understanding of women in an undeveloped or perverted state, she dealt with the facts of environment. Given the circumstances in which women were placed, and the result must inevitably be the condition, which she deplored. In explaining the moral inferiority of women, her task was beset with greater difficulties. The controversy between the Intuitional and Utilitarian Schools of English Ethics, the one taking a complete set of ultimate ethical truths for granted, the other making utility, or conduciveness to pleasure, the standard of conduct, found its echo in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The author repeatedly refers to the unsettled state of ethical conceptions, and desires to see the time, when morality will have a fixed basis, for then, she

believed, women also would realize more fully, that they are conscious moral agents.

There is little trace of the tenets of the Utilitarian School in her views; she was rather on the side of the Intuitional School. Her friend, Dr. Richard Price, was a member of this School. In his *Review of the Chief Questions and Difficulties of Morals*, he speaks of moral ideas as derived from the "intuition of truth or immediate discernment of the nature of things by the understanding." Dr. Price revived the views of Cudworth of the Cambridge School of Moralists, who maintained the "essential and eternal distinctions of good and evil" as independent of mere arbitrary will, whether human or divine. The philosophers of this School claimed, that the distinctions of good and evil have an objective reality, and the knowledge of them comes to the human mind from the divine. These are views which Mary Wollstonecraft evidently adopted, and in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* they are to be found in their application to her subject.

She argued, that one of the first and most far-reaching causes of woman's moral inferiority, was to be found in her inability to order her conduct according to the same eternal standard of virtue, which man considered binding to himself. The principles, which determined his conduct, were based upon his relation to the supreme Being; the conduct of woman was made subject to the will of man. Women were not permitted to turn to the foundation of light, but were "forced to shape their

course by the twinkling of a mere satellite."[1] Hence not only the degree of virtue attained was different in man and woman, but it was not the same in kind, for they had not the same criterion of morals. The virtues of women were often fluctuating, having no other foundation than utility, and of that utility men pretended arbitrarily to judge, shaping it to their own convenience.

"To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man," Mary Wollstonecraft says,

> "Many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character; or to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue. Yet it should seem, allowing them to have souls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead mankind to either virtue or happiness."[2]

That little hypothetical clause, "allowing them to have souls," takes for granted, what in the early centuries of the Christian era was a cause for ecclesiastical controversy. The council at Macon, in the sixth century, discussed at length the question whether woman was in possession of a soul. Mary Wollstonecraft is not called upon to meet the foe thus openly; he had hidden in her day behind a tacit understanding, that though women have souls, yet the distinction of sex must confine these souls within certain limits.

With a view to enhancing woman's usefulness to man, she was to practise those virtues, which fitted her for her subordinate position. They were the

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[1] Rights of Woman, p. 50. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

negative virtues, sometimes designated female virtues, principally gentleness, forbearance and long-suffering. But Mary Wollstonecraft makes a distinction between these virtues, when applied to the Deity in poetic strains, bearing on their front all the characteristics of grandeur, combined with the winning graces of condescension, and these same virtues when practised by helpless, oppressed women. Gentleness, she says, loses its godlike character, when it becomes the submissive demeanour of dependence, the support of weakness that loves, because it wants protection. It might be strictly philosophical to recommend gentleness on a broad basis to frail beings, but it could not then be termed a virtue. Forbearance too, when it confounds right and wrong, must cease to be a virtue. Thus not even the negative virtues could flourish beneath the sceptre of authority.

In Mary Wollstonecraft's day, as in ours, women were credited with possessing more goodness of heart, piety and benevolence than men. She doubts this assumption, for ignorance would thus be made the mother of devotion; and is persuaded, that "the proportion between virtue and knowledge is more upon a par than is commonly granted."[1] She is here in touch with some of the greatest philosophers of her own times and previous times. Spinoza, in the form of geometrical proof, gave the most classical demonstration of the close connection between reason and virtue. The existence of altruistic impulses, that seemingly arise spontane-

[1] Rights of Woman, p. 94.

ously, without conscious relation to the intellect, is not admitted by Mary Wollstonecraft. She would not have the sensibility of women, their strong attachments and instantaneous emotions of compassion interpreted as humanity, benevolence or generosity; for these qualities belong to mind as well as nerves. "Besides," she says, "how can women be just or generous, when they are the slaves of injustice?" [1]

That woman should have been just, was thus to her mind out of the question; that she should have been benevolent, again, was not to be expected; for ignorance kept her affections confined in a narrow channel, concentrated upon her husband and children, simply because they were her own. Friendship, too, requiring reason as its cement, she considered rare among women. Moreover with respect to each other, she reasoned, they were all rivals, and friendship was therefore almost impossible. Nor did she believe honesty and uprightness virtues peculiar to women; she found that they resorted rather to cunning and intrigue, the qualities of him, who is subordinate and yet craves power. Meanness and selfishness, Mary Wollstonecraft considered the characteristics of women, not because they were naturally so, but because their absolute dependence upon men made them so.

With an unsparing hand Mary Wollstonecraft pictures the women of her time as almost destitute of virtue. Not one of her critics accuses her of

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 280.

over-stepping the bounds of truth and fact; on the contrary, this portion of her work was commended as applicable to a large proportion of women. With her intense hatred of shams, she accused her country-women of undermining morality by substituting the show for the substance. They desired the appearance of virtue, though true worth was wanting. She cites the example of women, whom she had known, who neglected every domestic duty, even squandered away the money, which should have been saved for their helpless young children; and yet plumed themselves on their unsullied reputation, as if the whole compass of their duty as wives and mothers was only to preserve it. She had seen others, who were indolent and wanting in every virtue, and yet thought they had a claim upon their husband's affection, because they were faithful.

It is an indirect tribute to the state of morality in England at that time, that women desired, above all things, to be considered virtuous and true with respect to very important phases of civilized society. Mary Wollstonecraft refused to admit that it was binding upon woman more than upon man, to keep pure the hidden springs of social life. She speaks with pity of the outcast from society, and demands for her not mercy, but justice. With indignation she points to the woman, who spurns contact with her, who has offended against the laws of society; but receives into her presence him, who is also guilty. She is not unfair in her demands for equality in virtue; for while she expects, that women practise the whole range of virtues, even

those, which are thought peculiar to men; she expects equally, that men take their part in creating an environment of healthful morality. So thorough a student of the causes of woman's inferiority could not overlook the fact, that an atmosphere of social purity is an essential factor in the uplifting of woman.

Character is formed by engaging in the activities of life. Women were hedged in by limitations of various kinds, to the extent that normal development of character was not within their reach. They dared not pass out of the confined range of their surroundings, in order to strive for something that seemed to them useful and desirable. By carefully keeping them from contact with the contending forces of active life, they were not, however, made passionless; in their little narrow scope, they too had their passions. "By fits and starts they are warm in many pursuits; yet this warmth, never concentrated into perseverance, soon exhausts itself; exhaled by its own heat, or meeting with some other fleeting passion, to which reason has never given any specific gravity, neutrality ensues." [1] Reason, which makes the steady, unflinching pursuit of some object possible, is not there to lend aid. "When," Mary Wollstonecraft exclaims, "do we hear of women, who, starting out of obscurity, boldly claim respect on account of their great abilities or daring virtues? Where are they to be found?" [2] In another place she gives her answer:

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 105. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

"They were made to be loved, and must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine."[1]

The members of human society are necessarily dependent upon each other, in the various relations of life. Mary Wollstonecraft reasoned that the dependence of women upon men had assumed an exaggerated form. One of the occasional passages of humour in her book describes the reliance of women upon the physical support of men.

> "In the most trifling dangers," she says, "they cling to their support, with parasitical tenacity, piteously demanding succour; and their natural protector extends his arm, or lifts up his voice, to guard the lovely trembler—from what? Perhaps the frown of an old cow, or the jump of a mouse; a rat would be a serious danger. In the name of reason, and even common sense, what can save such beings from contempt, even though they be soft and fair?"[2]

This, she found was the result of confining women to close rooms, till their muscles were relaxed and those infantine airs were bred, that degrade a rational being. She insisted that girls should be sent out of doors to exercise, and that fear, when displayed by them, instead of being cherished, perhaps created, should be treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys. "It is true," Mary Wollstonecraft remarks, "they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society."[3]

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 69. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

But their physical dependence was only an accompaniment of their mental dependence. "Women," Mary Wollstonecraft claims, "are told from their infancy, and are taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives."[1] This was the character which obtained for girls all their mothers desired for them, and thus moral inferiority was passed down from generation to generation.

Mary Wollstonecraft upbraids the women of her times for their love of pleasure. Yet at the same time, she points out, that this was simply another outcome of their dependence on man. Had he desired a companion in toil, they would have fitted themselves for this place; for the seeking of pleasure was not a quality belonging specifically to women. On the other hand, he devoted his hours of leisure to them, and wanted a toy, "a rattle, to jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chose to be amused."[2] But virtue, in order to thrive, requires healthier atmosphere than the pursuit of pleasure can afford. The ambition to be man's companion in his hours of leisure brought the activities of women within very narrow limits. As Mary Wollstonecraft says: "Confined in cages like the feathered

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 49. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true, they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange."[1]

It might almost seem as if Mary Wollstonecraft had entered the ranks of writers of her day, who spoke lightly of women, and found occasion for witticism, as they reviewed the distorted form, which virtue assumed in their lives. Yet how different was her motive! She described the symptoms of the disease, in order to show, that her diagnosis was correct. It is difficult, in our day, to appreciate fully the serious drawbacks, experienced by the women, in certain classes of society, a century ago, who had been educated according to the approved standard of female excellence of the day, and were then called upon to meet the difficulties of life. They had been educated for man; yet man was not educated for them. They were ill prepared for the experience that awaited them, when dreams and sentiment were made subordinate to the hard facts of existence; or perhaps wholly crushed by coldness and harshness. Marriage could not eradicate the habitude of life; and the serious question then was, whether a woman had sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties. Often the spirit may have been broken by discontent, and moral inferiority established to an extent, that might almost be termed a human wreck.

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 98.

The discussion of the causes of woman's inferiority, as Mary Wollstonecraft traces them in their effects even in the hidden springs of action, that bless or curse private life, is not without its utilitarian element. She did not embrace the tenets of the Utilitarian School in Ethics in its tendency to make utility the sole standard of morality. Questions of mere utility had little hold upon her. There is, instead, a deep conviction in her writings, that happiness cannot be attained, when sought for its own sake. She believed that that, which is really of value in life, has to be attained amid stress and suffering. Yet she made the sound practical demand to know to what extent human happiness is attained by the prevailing system. Could woman, made inferior intellectually and morally by a variety of causes, thus contribute to the fullest extent to the well-being of the race? Did they, whose whole education had had for its object, that they should be made agreeable and useful to man, really make the best wives? And did the women, who had been rendered weak and trifling by surrounding conditions make the best mothers? This was bringing the problem to the practical test.

Mary Wollstonecraft answers these questions emphatically in the negative. She pictures women in the home; at work, it is true, but in a restless, unsystematic way; and points to the quiet resolution and the serious kind of perseverance, that is required to fulfil domestic duties. In the discharge of even the simplest duties, she thinks, there must be some plan of conduct; yet how can a sense of

order be expected "from a being who, from its infancy, has been made the weathercock of its own sensations."[1] By the neglect of the understanding, Mary Wollstonecraft claims, woman was detached from domestic employments to a greater degree, than could ever have been the case, by means of the most serious intellectual pursuits. Reason is absolutely necessary to aid in the performance of any duty, and again she repeats that sensibility is not reason.

But does not feeling guide a woman aright in the discharge of the duties, which motherhood lays upon her? An opinion prevailed, in her day as in ours; and no doubt much is to be said in favor of it; that by an innate instinct a mother knows what to do for her child; that her delicate tact can best devise the means that lead to its development. This opinion is directly opposed to the rationalistic basis of Mary Wollstonecraft's reasoning in general, and she makes no exception when her subject is the relation between mother and child. She demands an enlightened maternal affection, as opposed to that selfish attachment, which women have for their children merely because they are their own. Mary Wollstonecraft unsparingly censures the women of her times as neglectful of their duties as mothers. Some sent their babes to a nurse, and only took them from the nurse to send them to school. Others, women of sensibility, who wished to do their duty, but had not the sober, steady eye of reason, that plans conduct equally distant from tyranny and indulgence, vacillated between these

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 114.

two extremes, and proved themselves unfit to educate their children.

"To be a good mother," Mary Wollstonecraft says, "a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind, which few women possess, who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands. Meek wives are, in general, foolish mothers. They want their children to love them best, and take their part, in secret, against the father, who is held up as a scarecrow."[1] The author recognizes the transgressions against the law of heredity, of which men had been guilty by demanding unconditioned obedience from women, in exclaiming: "Who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigour to the virtue and talents of the freed posterity of abject slaves?"[2] Moreover she thinks it "vain to expect the present race of weak mothers either to take that reasonable care of a child's body, which is necessary to lay the foundation of a good constitution; or, to manage its temper so judiciously that the child will not have, as it grows up, to throw off all that its mother, its first instructor, directly or indirectly taught."

Thus Mary Wollstonecraft pictures woman as incapacitated even for that sphere, which, in accordance with the laws of nature, and the common opinion of mankind, is peculiarly her own; weak, because she leans on a being, who, like herself is often in need of support; unable to see in the true light her relation to her kindred, and therefore deprived of comfort and satisfaction, which should

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 227. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

be the outcome of family relation; shut out from participation in those broad interests that concern the welfare of the nation and of the human race. In the performance of their duties, women fell short in rendering to society that, which was due. Yet though Mary Wollstonecraft points out the failures and the weakness of women, as they faced every important duty of life, justice compels her again and again to call attention to the principle, which has been slow in gaining a foothold in human society, that where there are duties, there are also rights. Authority, she says, cannot compel women to discharge their duties in a virtuous manner. But if, after they have received their rights, and have learned how to use them, they should continue to fail in the performance of their duties, then, and not until then, it would be just to term them beings, who are morally inferior by nature.

Mary Wollstonecraft's discussion of the moral inferiority of women is peculiarly one-sided. There were many in her day, who shared her opinion that women are morally inferior. She does not in this respect stand isolated. Moreover, since she had set herself the task of showing, that women suffered because deprived of their rights, she was justified in making her argument as forcible as she could, consistent with truthfulness. If, to-day, her language seems severe, it must be remembered that she possessed the traits of the reformer, and shared the reformer's tendency to exaggerate the evils against which he is at war.

It is not in this respect that her discussion is open to criticism. A subtle error runs through her argument, which has its root in her excessive rationalism. She makes the mistake of applying to the moral nature of women a formula of rationalism, and, according to this, demonstrates their inferiority. To argue, that reason and virtue stand to each other in close relation, that women have not learned to use their reason, and that therefore they have no virtue, is manifestly a proceeding that leads to a false conclusion. Mary Wollstonecraft could not arrive at a correct estimate of the moral status of women, by exalting reason, and ignoring the function of conscience, of spontaneous impulses, that gather strength from family traits, race characteristics, general environment and religious motive.

CHAPTER VIII.

Her Demands for the Education of Woman.

Mary Wollstonecraft in her study of history, and in her observations of the condition of man, came to the conclusion, that either nature had made great difference between man and man, or that the civilization, that had hitherto taken place, had been very partial. She says: "I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result?—A profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore." [1]

Her definition of education is as follows: "By individual education, I mean, such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper, regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity; so that the man may only

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 31.

have to proceed, not to begin, the important task of learning to think and reason."[1] She claims that education is viewed in a false light, if it is regarded as a preparation for life; it is in itself and for all human beings a good and desirable possession.

The conception of education, which makes human perfection the end in view, has a strong ethical back ground Where education is regarded in the light of a preparation for life, there is necessarily a bending of ideals to mere questions of utility. Mary Wollstonecraft's rationalistic tendencies here serve to form the basis of her views on education. The perfectibility of human reason is the cornerstone, and all the various schemes of life, which demand a preparation, that runs counter to the claims of human reason, to attain to a perfection, which should be sought for its own sake, are set aside. She thus lays the foundation for equality in pedagogical lines. Distinction of sex is obliterated, where reason and its perfectibility constitute the claim upon educational opportunities. Woman's right to an education, regardless of the question whether it will fit her, or unfit her, for her peculiar duties, is thus established; for she is endowed with reason, and the demands of reason must first be satisfied, the question of utility will find its own answer in each individual case, as the mind unfolds.

Undoubtedly, Mary Wollstonecraft, not only in the tendency of her philosophical, but also of her pedagogical thought, sat at the feet of her great countryman, John Locke. Locke's pedagogy is an

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 51.

organic part of his philosophy. Since he considers the mind as *tabula rasa* at birth, it is the object of education to direct the impressions, which the soul receives through the senses, in such a way, that the powers of reason may be unfolded and moral development keep pace with intellectual growth. Reason and virtue stand in very direct relation in his philosophy; for reason guides the will, and to think right, is to act right. Virtue and happiness are to each other as cause and effect, and virtue is cultivated by an habitual restraint upon the desires and passions that seek those minor possessions of life, which are calculated to satisfy only temporary needs.

In her first little treatise on education, Mary Wollstonecraft refers to Locke in the following words: "To be able to follow Mr. Locke's system, (and this may be said of almost all treatises on education) the parents must have subdued their own passions, which is not often the case in any considerable degree."[1] There are sentences in this little book that seem to point directly to Locke. She says: "It is the duty of a parent to preserve a child from receiving wrong impressions."[2] And again: "Above all, try to teach them to combine their ideas. It is of more use than can be conceived, for a child to learn to compare things that are similar in some respects, and different in others."[3] This reasoning is certainly much after

[1] Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, p. 11, London 1787.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[3] The Rights of Woman, p. 22.

the manner of Locke, and seems to indicate, that she had followed his precepts, converted them into practice, and was then coining them into advice, which was the result of her own experience; for when she wrote her *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, she was a teacher. The foundation of her pedagogical views was therefore laid under the influence of Locke. Rousseau's *Emile*, the second great pedagogical treatise of the century, came into her hands when her strictly educational career had nearly come to a close. She found the book most attractive, yet there is little direct trace of its influence upon her educational views.

Locke's pedagogy was decidedly rationalistic, while Rousseau's method in education was the method of mental inactivity."[1] Emile, until he is fifteen years of age, is to be educated by the senses; reflection does not have a place; for ideas are signs that have to him no meaning. "Childhood," says Rousseau, "is the sleep of reason,"[2] and since children are not capable of independent judgment, it would not be wise to make them acquainted with subjects, that are beyond their comprehension. These expressions were plainly directed against Locke, who says: "Children are at an early age susceptible to reason, and consider it an honor to be treated as reasonable beings."[3] Mary Wollstonecraft agrees with Locke: "It is easier, I grant," she says, "to command than reason; but it does

[1] Rousseau: Emile, Book II. § 152.

[2] *Ibid.*, § 114.

[3] J. Locke: Some Thoughtson Education, § 81.

not follow that children cannot comprehend the reason, why they are made to do certain things habitually."[1]

In a short chapter on *Duty to Parents*, in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she protests against the misuse of authority, which she had often seen in the attitude of parents toward their children. She says: "A slavish bondage to parents cramps every faculty of the mind," and quotes Mr. Locke as judiciously observing that, "if the mind be curbed and humbled too much in children; if the spirits be abased and broken much by too strict a hand over them; they lose all their vigour and industry."[2] Locke in his *Treatise on Civil Government* claims in cool, logical argument, that "the time comes when a child is as free from subjection to the will and command of his father, as the father himself is free from subjection to the will of anybody else."[3] This thought is clothed by Mary Wollstonecraft in more passionate language. The memory of the species of tyranny, which she endured under her parental roof adds warmth to her protests. The revolutionary spirit penetrates her views on education. She attacks the vestiges of the patriarchal system, which, in its strongest development, gave the father unlimited power even over the life of his children.

Both Locke and Rousseau were in favor of private education. The former, in *Some Thoughts concerning Education* dealt with the education

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 233. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 232.

[3] J. Locke: Treatise in Civil Government, VI. § 66.

by his tutor of a nobleman's son; and the latter, in his *Emile* took a boy of common capacity and depicted the help given by a tutor to aid his natural course of development. Mary Wollstonecraft evidently refers to this, when she says: "A man cannot retire into a desert with his child, and if he did, he could not bring himself back to childhood, and become the proper friend and play fellow of an infant or youth." [1] Children confined to the society of men and women soon acquire, she thinks, a kind of premature manhood, that stops the vigorous growth of mind or body. If a number of children are made to pursue the same objects, their faculties open and they are excited to think for themselves. But however great a child's affection for his parent may be, he will always long to play and prattle with other children, and it is only in the society of his equals in age, that he acquires frank ingenuousness of behaviour and lays the foundation of that broad love for humanity that should mark the citizen.

Mary Wollstonecraft voiced the sentiments of the French Republicans, in advocating national education. She thus favored measures not sanctioned by Locke, and strenuously opposed by Rousseau. Locke decided against it largely because a teacher, who has charge of a number of children, cannot give adequate attention to the individuality of each pupil. Rousseau, in the opening remarks of his first chapter in *Emile*, discusses the question, as to whether the end in view in

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 236.

the education of his pupil is, to train him to be a human being, or to be a citizen. As he made a distinction between natural liberty and civil liberty, so he distinguishes between man as nature moulds him, who is everything in himself, and man the citizen, whose value can only be determined by his relations to social life. Emile, until he is fifteen years of age, cultivates those virtues only, which refer to himself. He is industrious, temperate, patient, persistent, and full of courage. Of social virtues he is ignorant; until after a period of rapid transition, warm love for humanity springs up in his heart, and with it the appreciation of the virtues that bind society.

This course does not commend itself to Mary Wollstonecraft. She would begin early to train children to be good citizens. In the national schools, which she advocated, in place of the various kinds of private schools, then in vogue in England, she desired various measures to be adopted, that would nourish public spirit. Every species of tyranny was to be excluded. She would banish the office of ushers, who in their dependent position, were often looked upon by the master in the light of servants; yet the pupils were expected to obey them. "I believe," she says, "that experience will ever prove, that this kind of subordinate authority is particularly injurious to the morals of youth. What indeed, can tend to deprave the character more than outward submission and inward contempt."[1] This humane spirit was even to extend

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 250.

to the treatment of animals. "Humanity to animals," she remarks, "should be particularly inculcated as a part of national education, for it is not at present one of our national virtues."[1] In advocating this, she looked not only to the well-being of the animals, that fell into the way of boys at school and furnished them rare sport; she looked to the consequences of habitual cruelty practised during school-days. "The transition, as they grow up, from barbarity to brutes, to domestic tyranny over wives, children and servants, is very easy; justice, or even benevolence, will not be a powerful spring of action unless it extend to the whole creation."

A peculiarly democratic measure, which Mary Wollstonecraft would see introduced into national schools, was that of making children and youths independent of the masters respecting punishments. "They should be tried by their peers, which would be an admirable method of fixing sound principles of justice in the mind, and might have the happiest effect on the temper, which is very early soured or irritated by tyranny, till it becomes peevishly cunning or ferociously overbearing."[2] Objections might be raised against this measure, on the ground that children would have the character of the citizen impressed upon them, at too early an age; for justice seems rather to be a virtue peculiar to riper years. Yet children, who passed through schools, where they had not become accustomed to dread the display of despotic power, on the part of the

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 256. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

master, and had learned to look upon each other as equals, associating with each other as such; and had even been introduced to the science of weighing each other's conduct in the balance of justice, would be in possession of training, that would tend to ripen the powers for an early participation in the duties of a democratic government.

This measure had been advocated by Prince Talleyrand, in his pamphlet on *The Improvement of National Education.* Some of the opinions expressed in this pamphlet, had been adopted by Mary Wollstonecraft. Talleyrand, whose views in the direction of ecclesiastical reform had had such marked effect upon the National Assembly in France, had opinions to offer on educational matters also; for France was at that time in a political position to revise its system of education. The new constitution, drawn up by the French Republicans, shortly before Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, provided for general education, but omitted measures for the education of girls after the age of eight. They were to be trained by their parents at home, chiefly in the domestic arts, since they only were considered useful for them. Condorcet alone believed in the intellectual equality of the sexes. In England education did not become a national concern until the latter part of the present century. An English author writes: "Three centuries have passed away since England, through the Protestant Reformation, declared that light was better than darkness, and only seventeen years since we

decided that light was better for the mass of the people." [1]

However much may be said in favour of national education, the system has its defects, and some of these were pointed out by Godwin in his *Political Justice*. In his chapter on National Education, after stating the arguments generally brought forward in its favour, he mentions, under three heads, the injuries which may result from it. In the first place, all public establishments include the idea of permanence. Though they realize the most substantial benefits at the time of their introduction, this must inevitably become less and less the case, as they increase in duration, until finally they actively restrain the flights of mind, and fix it in the belief of exploded errors. Godwin says: "It has frequently been observed of universities, and extrusive establishments for the purpose of education, that the knowledge taught there, is a century behind the knowledge, which exists among the unshackled and unprejudiced members of the same political community." [2] His charge is, that public education has always expended its energies in the support of prejudice; that it teaches its pupils, not the fortitude, that shall bring every proposition to the test of examination, but the art of vindicating such tenets, as may chance to be established; and this

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[1] Thomas Kirkup: An Inquiry into Socialism, p. 23. London 1887.

[2] William Godwin: Enquiry concerning Political Justice and its influence on Morals and Happiness. Fourth Edition, London 1842. Volume II, p. 143.

charge is not a light one. Godwin is jealous for intellectual freedom. The instant, when a man decides upon closing the career of enquiry, is equivalent to him, to the instant of his intellectual decease.

The second defect in the system of national education is psychological. It is in accordance with the nature of man's mind, that whatever each man does for himself, is done well; whatever his neighbours, or his country, undertake to do for him, is done ill. There must be desire, either to teach or to learn, before enthusiasm and energy carry the effort forward to success. Man estimates at its true value, that, which he acquires, because he desires it, while that, which is thrust upon him, may make him indolent, but cannot make him respectable. This reverts to one of Godwin's fundamental propositions, that "unpatronized truth is inadequate to the purpose of enlightening mankind."

The third point which Godwin makes, is that national education means the alliance between education and the government, an alliance, which seems to him more formidable, than the much contested alliance between church and state. Government, he believes, would not fail to strengthen its hands, and to perpetuate its institutions. The views of its agents, as institutors of a system of education, would be analogous to the data, upon which their conduct as statesmen is vindicated. Godwin says: "Had the scheme of a national education been adopted, when despotism was most triumphant, it is not to be believed, that it could have for ever

stifled the voice of truth. But it would have been the most formidable and profound contrivance for that purpose, that imagination can suggest."

Professor Menger says of Godwin, that the germs of the ideas of modern socialism and anarchism are to be found in his work.[1] Looking at this small chapter of his work, it is evident that his argument is turned against socialism. In the objection on psychological grounds, he uses the argument, which is one of the strongest, that socialism has to face. Equality of opportunity, the watchword of socialism, finds no place in this most important factor in human development. He is, in this case, on the side of anarchy, advocating complete negation of government control, while all power is vindicated to the individual, to carry on his investigations concerning truth and justice in his own way. The question, as to how opportunity is to be offered, finds its answer in his views on property, which give him an important place in the historical part of the discussions of to-day, on this vexed question in economic science. His theory is, that each member of the community has a permanent right to the use of those things, which, attributed to him, result in a greater sum of benefit or pleasure, than if otherwise appropriated. This theory seems Utopian, even after a century of much agitation, concerning the unequal distribution of wealth. Yet the principle is one that governs many well regulated families; communistic socie-

[1] Dr. Anton Menger: Das Recht auf den vollen Arbeitsertrag. Zweite Auflage. Stuttgart, 1891, p. 40.

ties have applied it to practice on a larger scale. Godwin, however, admits, that a complete moral change must be wrought in mankind, before this principle can to any extent be reduced to practice.

Mary Wollstonecraft deals with the actual facts in the economic conditions of her times, that made it desirable, that the nation should carry on the work of education. Her course is in the direction of socialism. Her criticism of the system of education prevalent in England at the time, was all levelled against the interference of property with pedagogical principles. Two kinds of schools were in vogue, boarding schools and day schools, and both were private enterprises. The evils, which follow in the train of private property, foremost of which is competition, were of peculiar effect here. Mary Wollstonecraft spoke from experience; for she too had conducted a day-school, and had found herself dependent on the caprice of parents. She describes, how the master finds himself under necessity of giving the parents some sample of the boy's abilities, which during vacation is shown to every visitor; how he loads the memory of the pupil with unintelligible words, of which to make a show; and winds the poor machine up to some extraordinary exertion, that injures the wheels and stops the progress of gradual improvement. "Yet how can these things be remedied," she says, "whilst schoolmasters depend entirely on parents for a subsistence; and, when so many rival schools hang out their lures to catch the attention of vain fathers and mothers, whose parental affection only leads them

to wish that their children should outshine those of their neighbours?"[1] This evil must have had unusual scope at that time in England; for she adds: "Without great good luck, a sensible, conscientious man would starve before he could raise a school, if he disdained to bubble weak parents by practising the secret tricks of the craft."

In boarding schools the strain was apparent in another direction. The parents were often in quest of the cheapest schools, and the master could not live, if he did not take a much greater number than he could manage. Many crammed together, the body, heart and understanding were equally stunted. Boys, who, at great expense, lived with the masters and assistants, were never domesticated; for the former kept up an intercourse with the nobility, which introduced vanity and extravagance into their families. Those professions, says Mary Wollstonecraft, are most debasing, whose ladder is patronage; yet out of one of these professions the tutors of the boys were chosen. "But, can they be expected to inspire independent sentiments, whose conduct must be regulated by the cautious prudence that is ever on the watch for preferment?" She continues: "So far, however, from thinking of the morals of boys, I have heard several masters of schools argue, that they only undertook to teach Latin and Greek; and that they had fulfilled their duty, by sending some good scholars to college."[2]

Her remarks in this connection show how closely she occasionally touches the doctrines of socialism.

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 244. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

She admits, that a few good scholars may have been formed by emulation and discipline, but she regrets the health and morals of the large number, who have been sacrificed to bring forward these few clever boys. "It is not for the benefit of society," she says, "that a few brilliant men should be brought forward at the expense of the multitude. It is true that great men seem to start up, as great revolutions occur, at proper intervals, to restore order, and to blow aside the clouds that thicken over the face of truth; but let more reason and virtue prevail in society, and these strong winds would not be necessary."[1] Her contention is against an aristocracy of learning; though she perceives, that where there is equality of opportunity, and the survival of the fittest does not imply so much of stress, exceptionally great men will no longer arise, but the average will rise to a higher level. She is in favour of a high average.

The restraint and wearisome confinement, in boarding schools for girls, was even greater than that endured by boys. Even in their hours of recreation, as Mary Wollstonecraft had seen in some institutions, they were not allowed to play in the garden, in healthful exercise, but were obliged to pace with steady deportment, stupidly backwards and forwards, in the one broad walk; holding up their heads and turning out their toes, with shoulders braced back. "The pure animal spirits, which make both mind and body shoot out, and unfold the tender blossoms of hope, were turned sour, and

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 242.

were vented in vain wishes or pert repinings, that contract the faculties and spoil the temper."[1] Some of the characteristics of the female mind, that Mary Wollstonecraft deplores, she traces to the influences that stunted the development of girls in these boarding schools.

The author draws a pleasing picture of the country day-school, where a boy trudged in the morning, wet or dry, carrying his books, and returned in the evening to recount the feats of the day close at the parental knee. She appeals to many superior men, who were educated in this manner, whether their father's home was not ever after fondly remembered; and whether the recollection of some shady lane, where they conned their lesson, or of some stile, where they sat making a kite, did not endear their country to them. Those day-schools, she believed, contained the most important elements of a sound education; for they gave opportunity for that blending of home influences and school discipline, that tends to mould the citizen. "Public education, of every denomination," she says, "should be directed to form citizens; but if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother. This is the only way to expand the heart; for public affections as well as public virtues must ever grow out of the private character."[1]

This is a beautiful vindication of home life and family ties. In the State, the individual finds his highest development; yet this cannot be attained

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 246. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 242.

without the nurture of the heart, and that exercise of youthful sympathies, to which family life gives play. Affection for mankind is seldom found in those, "who did not first love their parents, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes, their first play-mates."[1] If children were separated from their parents for educational purposes, Mary Wollstonecraft doubts, whether they would become better citizens, by sacrificing the preparatory affections and thus "destroying the force of relationships that render the marriage state as necessary as it is respectable."[2]

Those who, judging from the title, expected to find that the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* attacked the sanctity of the family, had here the strongest evidence, that this was not the case. The claims, which children have upon that permanent union of their parents, that forms the foundation of the influences, that have the most powerful bearing upon their lives, is here respected and insisted upon. Moreover, since the immediate care of the children devolves upon the mother, Mary Wollstonecraft marked out to a majority of women their chief employment, for at least a term of years. She expresses this in another connection in the following words: "Speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures, and the next in point of importance, as citizens, is that, which includes so many, of a mother."[3] The duties of motherhood do not, according to her

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 243. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

opinion, take the first place. Woman owes it to herself and to the family, which she may rear, to strive in the direction of a rich intellectual and moral maturity, that shall fit her to choose the kind of work, to which she would give herself, whether this work is dictated by the claims of maternity, or by fitness for other pursuits.

Mary Wollstonecraft is in advance of her time, in her demand, that mothers should represent personality in themselves. They are not to sink into the daily routine of caring for their children's wants, generally the material wants only; for the mother, who is reduced to the drudge, has lost the elasticity of mind, that keeps step with the mental growth of her children. "If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot," Mary Wollstonecraft rightly says. The *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* has the aim of making women better mothers; and by insisting that education should not take children out of their homes, the author leaves the full range of those maternal activities open, that put into the hands of women some of the highest and most far-reaching duties, which the State can call upon its citizens to perform. So far then from cramping maternal instincts, their rightful and honored place in the organism of the State is vindicated to them.

The object, which Mary Wollstonecraft seeks mainly to accomplish by advocating national education is the introduction of co-education. Her plan for the establishment of national schools is as

follows: The teachers are to be chosen by a select committee in each parish, to whom complaints of negligence can be made; if signed by six of the children's parents. Without distinction of sex or wealth, children under nine years of age are to be taught in schools absolutely free to all, and obliged to submit to the same discipline, or leave the school. In order to prevent any distinctions of vanity, she would even see the children dressed alike. But study is not to be made irksome to the little ones; they are not to be confined to sedentary employment for more than an hour at a time; but much is to be taught them by way of relaxation. The school-room is to be surrounded by a large piece of ground, and here they are to be taught the elements of botany, astronomy and mechanics; for "many things improve and amuse the senses, when introduced as a kind of show, to the principles of which, dryly laid down, children would turn a deaf ear."[1]

She evidently anticipates in these sensible measures the modern Kindergarten. She would also see the Socratic form of teaching by conversation introduced, as the best way of teaching children the elements of religion, history and politics. It is to be noticed, that she does not omit the study of religion in her plan for national education. After the age of nine, differentiation is to begin, natural aptitude and individual choice is to be taken into consideration; and while all remain together in the morning, to continue their

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 251.

studies, the afternoons may be devoted by boys to learning mechanical trades, by girls to learning to do house-work and millinery. She would thus place industrial training also under national protection.

Co-education forms the central and well defined thought of the chapter on national education. In advocating the desirability of educating young people together, she tread on new ground; for at that time not even a limited practical experience offered foundation for theory. Yet, as she had claimed throughout, that the nature of reason is the same in all; and had denounced the system of female education, which exaggerated feeling and neglected the understanding, it remained to be shown, how that reason was to receive the training, that would enable woman to take her place by the side of man. Nothing could seem a simpler solution than co-education.

She did not hesitate, lest by advocating something new, she might destroy that, which had borne well the test of experience. There is a touch of sarcasm in the last sentence of the following appeal, which she makes to the French nation:

> "Let an enlightened nation then try, what effect reason would have, to bring women back to nature, and their duty; and allowing them to share the advantages of education and government with man, see whether they will become better as they grow wiser and become free. They cannot be injured by the experiment; for it is not in the power of man to render them more insignificant than they are at present."[1]

Women had nothing to lose, and much to gain.

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[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 250.

It is significant of the socialistic tendency of the demands of Mary Wollstonecraft, that she expects equality in education not through individual effort, but as a right granted by broad national policy. The only criticism that can be made to-day, is, that her demands did not reach far enough. She rightly demanded that primary schools should be national establishments; had she followed this to its logical consummation, she would have demanded, that higher education likewise should be sheltered by national institutions, open to rich and poor, man and woman, regardless of colour and creed. This would have been in accordance with the inherent tendency of the process of social development at the present time. She took the first step; in the midst of the second she halted. In sketching her plan for a system of national education, after speaking of primary education, she says: "The young people of superior abilities, or fortune, might now be taught, in another school, the dead and living languages, the elements of science, and continue the study of history and politics, on a more extensive scale." [1] This would make the right of entry, to the institutions for higher education, the privilege of wealth. Class distinction would thus remain, to divide society into two classes, the educated and the uneducated. Equality of opportunity cannot be realized, where the mere possession of riches can secure one of the most influential privileges, that of education.

Mary Wollstonecraft is very moderate in her demands for the higher education of women. She

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 251.

was treading on unknown territory; for though the brilliant achievements of some of the women of her times might have fanned her hopes; yet, in her book, she resolutely looks away from the exceptional cases, and confines herself to the plain, dull average; and there she had nothing to inspire hope beyond the fact, that woman is in possession of reason, and that reason in its nature must be the same in all. Her hints and suggestions are given largely with a view to fitting them for their position in the home; for it is her chief contention, that the ignorance, in which women are kept, tends to incapacitate the maternal character, and thus takes woman out of her sphere. The ignorance of women, she claims, renders the infancy of man a much more perilous state than that of animals. If it were only on this account, she deems the national education of women of the utmost importance. "In public schools therefore, to guard against the errors of ignorance, women should be taught the elements of anatomy and medicine, not only to enable them to take care of their own health, but to make them rational nurses of their children, parents and husbands."[1] They should be led to observe the progress of the human understanding in the improvement of the sciences and arts; "never forgetting the science of morality, or the study of the political history of mankind."

It might seem, in considering these special lines of study, which Mary Wollstonecraft recommends to women, that, after all, the distinction of sex is to

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 263.

enter education. She says nothing of a classical education, of the severe mental drill, which men must undergo. Expediency seems to be the motive that inspires her advice; she would have women trained to fulfil domestic duties, to be wise mothers. Even if this were the case, there would be a wide difference, between this end in view, and that of writers of her day, who merely sought to educate women in a way, that they might be pleasing to men. Does Mary Wollstonecraft merit the charge, that after she had fought sexual distinction in the realm of mind everywhere else, she leaves space here for the entering wedge?

It might seem so on the surface. Looking deeper, however, it appears that Mary Wollstonecraft had an insight into the needs of the human race, beyond that of many educationalists even of the present time. Her observations concerning higher education do not extend very far, but she insists on co-education throughout. She does not give a forecast of the college woman of to-day, nor does she discuss the advisability of Medical Colleges for women, distinct from those of men. It is sufficient, that at a time, seventy-five years in advance of the first woman, who held her diploma as a medical practitioner, she possessed the optimism to say: "Women might certainly study the art of healing and be physicians as well as nurses." [1] Her remarks, which seemingly look to expediency only, indicate a perception, dim perhaps, and not fully enunciated, that after the whole range of educational advantages

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 221.

had been opened out to women, by means of co-education; and after individualism had thus received its just dues, in an unrestrained opportunity of choice, that then differentiation according to sex may begin, and that women, to a good degree, must specialize in the studies, that pertain to home-life. The study of sociology has opened out, in our own day, avenues of research, which seem specially inviting to women. Mary Wollstonecraft's scant suggestions seem to point to this field of enquiry, as offering opportunity for investigation of both theoretical and practical nature. The true constitution of the family and its various functions, the bearing of domestic economy upon political economy, the prevention of crime, and many other social problems await their solution, to some extent, at the hands of women.

Mary Wollstonecraft left the widest scope to the self-assertiveness of the individual, but combines with this a full appreciation of the relation of the individual to the progress of the race. The individual must be subordinate to the process of development, that carries forward humanity; yet in serving the interests of the whole, he takes the path, that leads most readily to the furtherance of his personal welfare. This conception Mary Wollstonecraft has embodied in her views concerning the education of women; and has thereby given to her demands the character of reasonableness and applicability.

CHAPTER IX.

HER VINDICATION OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

SHORTLY before Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Talleyrand Perigord, late Bishop of Autun, with whom she was personally acquainted, had published a pamphlet on National Education, in which he observed, that "to see one-half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation of government, was a political phenomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain." She took for granted, that he had herewith admitted the correctness of the principles, which lay at the basis of her demands. With full confidence in him as a staunch supporter of liberal views, she hoped that opportunity would offer, when his influence could do much to bring those principles to the practical test in behalf of women.

In the beginning of that century, authors were wont, in a somewhat slavish spirit, to dedicate their books to their patrons of rank and means, in the

hope, that their words of flattery would realize for them an adequate recompense. Motives of this kind were far from influencing the author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* She was animated by the democratic spirit of her times. The commendation of the people was the reward she sought; and the acceptance of the measures, which she advocated, her highest ambition. The French nation seemed to her to stand foremost among the nations, in its readiness to examine new thoughts, and its ability to apply them. She thought that some of the great minds, who formed the constitution of the French Republicans, would coincide with her, and that when this constitution was revised, the rights of woman would be respected.

Mary Wollstonecraft opposed the commonly accepted opinion, that woman's activities could be confined to domestic affairs. The events of the French Revolution had plainly shown, that women, however ignorant they might be, would interest themselves in political affairs; and that, "if they were not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they would intermeddle with cunning tricks and dark intrigues, in order to obtain illicit privileges." She maintained, that unless it could be proven, that women are not in possession of reason, the State has no right to exclude them from a participation in the natural rights of mankind. This she considers the flaw in the New Constitution, in which French Democracy gloried. It seemed to indicate that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant; "and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears

its brazen front, will ever undermine morality." A people like the French, who had contended for their freedom, and for the privilege of being allowed to judge for themselves, respecting their own happiness, could not now, she thought, be so inconsistent and unjust, that they should continue to subjugate women. That they firmly believed, that they were acting in the manner best calculated to promote the happiness of women, did not, she thought, detract from the injustice; for "who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?"

To some extent Mary Wollstonecraft shared in the confidence, which some of the reformers of her times had in the efficacy of liberty. She thought the boon of freedom would be an effectual means of the regeneration of women. Her appeal to men is: "Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous."[1] There is a touch of impatience in this demand, as if the application of a single formula could work the change, which improved conditions only can bring about in the slow process of growth. This was but the noble species of impatience, that possesses the reformer. Yet, she was too practical and withal had too much of that philosophical trait, which traces effects back to their causes, to consider freedom, by itself, a solution of the real and positive difficulties and necessities of social life.

As an educator, Mary Wollstonecraft reposed confidence in the exercise of the understanding, and

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 261.

in the habits of virtue that form the heart. But she did not believe that private education could work the wonders, which some writers had attributed to it; for men and women must be educated in a great degree by the opinions and manners of the society in which they live. "In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion, that has carried all before it, and given a family character, as it were, to the century."[1] Unless, therefore, society be differently constituted, education must, in a degree, be ineffectual. There is here a broad conception of the state. With all her individualism, that claimed for each the right to strive unhindered for perfection, Mary Wollstonecraft yet perceives, that the state is an organic whole, of which the individual forms but a part. Education, which is directed to the individual, is well-nigh powerless, if its precepts do not run parallel with the principles, that govern the state.

This reciprocal relation between the individual and the state lends substance to her claim, that women must either advance or retard progress. They form a part of the whole, and legislators cannot set aside, lightly, so prominent a factor in the weal or woe of a nation. Public virtues are based upon private virtues, which send their roots deep into the life of the home. The purity of private life, without which a nation cannot be strong and free, has its hidden springs in the position of woman; impure and foul, if the charms of her sex form her claim upon a place in society;

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

pure and invigorating, if she earns for herself that respect, which soundness of understanding and firmness of character call forth. Children, the hope of the nation, receive the nurture of true patriotism, when the mothers have that broad love of mankind, that can only be produced, by habitually considering the moral and civil interests of mankind.

What then, is the form of government, that would offer to woman that ample opportunity, without which education must remain one-sided and ineffectual? Of monarchy Mary Wollstonecraft sees naught but the abuses, and overlooks the fact, that monarchies, forming a necessary step in the progress of the human race, must possess some portion of intrinsic merit. The Revolutionists in England were wont to point to the court of the king of France, as the hot-bed of vice, which poisoned the nation. Their own king, George III., was not an example of a great and enlightened ruler. His narrow despotism was scarcely in keeping with British independence. History seemed to support the general statement, that "it is impossible for any man, even when the most favorable circumstances concur, to acquire sufficient knowledge and strength of mind to discharge the duties of a king, entrusted with uncontrolled power."[1] Though actuated by the best of intentions, he was surrounded by an indolent court, from which the contagion of luxury spread and became the instrument of tyranny.

The days of true heroism, when men fought for the safety of their country, Mary Wollstone-

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 44.

craft thought, were over; and now soldiers could only gather their vainglorious laurels, whilst they adjusted to a hair the European balance. Standing armies had become schools of despotism, because despotism was necessary, to give vigour to enterprizes, that one will directed. The statesman, too, whose chief merit lay in the art of keeping himself in place, considered a war a fortunate opportunity for himself. "The whole system of British politics, if system it may courteously be called, consists in multiplying dependents and contriving taxes which grind the poor to pamper the rich."[1] Every rank in society was eager to get the gold, which so surely paved the way to respect. Poverty, Mary Wollstonecraft claimed, in her time, could degrade a man more than vice in the eyes of his fellowmen. The preposterous distinctions of rank, dividing the world between voluptuous tyrants and cunning, envious dependents, corrupted almost every class of people, because respectability was not attached to the discharge of the relative duties of life, but to the station.

This is the picture, which Mary Wollstonecraft unrolls before the reader, of the conditions, as she saw them, existing under monarchical government. She did not share in the admiration of Montesquieu, and other great minds of that century, for British constitutional government, but pointed to the abuses of power, rank and wealth, which stifled the best aspirations of the individual. "For a man," she says, "there are still some loop-holes, out of which he may

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 216.

creep, and dare to think and act for himself; but for a woman it is an Herculean task, because she has difficulties peculiar to her sex to overcome, which require almost superhuman powers."

A representative government, with universal suffrage, is evidently the ideal, which Mary Wollstonecraft desires to see realized. Such a system of government could give to women a civil and political existence in the most natural way. It would open a road, by which women of a superior cast could pursue more extensive plans of usefulness and independence. She pointedly remarks, "I may excite laughter by dropping a hint, which I mean to pursue some future time, for I really think that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed, without having any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government."[1] This thought she intended to elaborate in a second volume of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which, however, owing to her early death, was never written. Her next remark shows, that she had little confidence in the British system of representation, as it then was. She thinks women need not complain; "for they are as well represented as a numerous class of hard-working mechanics, who pay for the support of royalty, when they can scarcely stop their children's mouths with bread."[2]

To France she turns, with the hope of seeing the suffrage of women included in universal suffrage. Bluntschli speaks of a petition, signed

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 220. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

by many women and addressed to the king, in the early days of the French Revolution, requesting that women be admitted to the rights of citizens, that suffrage be extended to them, and that they receive power to elect representatives from their own number. Condorcet, the philosopher, recommended this petition, nevertheless the National Assembly, with scorn and derision expressed their unwillingness to receive it.[1] It is very probable that Mary Wollstonecraft knew of this circumstance; and if she did, it could but have encouraged her, to believe that a strong appeal, backed by argument such as her book contained, would prepare the minds of legislators to regard a second attempt to introduce woman's suffrage with more favor. Talleyrand, who was yet regarded with favor by the French Republicans, and who had shown, that his powers to carry his point in the National Assembly ranked very high, was sent to England in the beginning of 1792 on a political mission. It must have been on this occasion, that his visit to Mary Wollstonecraft's lodgings in George Street, which Fuseli's biographer[2] records, took place; when they drank tea together, and discussed social and political problems. The time of his visit in England coincides with that of the publication of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

There is room for conjecture concerning the hopes, which Talleyrand may have held out, of

[1] J. C. Bluntschli: Allgemeine Staatslehre, p. 228.
[2] John Knowles: The Life of Fuseli; Volume I, p. 160.

championship in the cause, that she had made her own, which led her to dedicate her book to him, and in doing so, to make a direct appeal to the French nation. But the days of Talleyrand's popularity with the French Republicans soon after came to an end. Exiled from France and England, he embarked to America. A man of unusually chequered career, Mary Wollstonecraft's confidence in him was misplaced. Equally futile was her hope, that French Republicans would seriously consider her appeal. Had she turned to those colonists across the Atlantic, who were then framing laws and drawing up their constitution, she would have addressed the nation, which was destined to be the first to extend suffrage to women.

In demanding the enfranchisement of women, Mary Wollstonecraft looked to their political existence. But she considered the civil rights of women equally in need of vindication. When a woman discharged her civil duties, when, while her husband was employed in any of the departments of civil life, she was intent on managing her family, educating her children and assisting her neighbours, as an active citizen, it seemed but right that she should enjoy, individually, the protection of civil laws. That ancient opinion, which considers the husband the representative of his wife's opinions and interests before the law, finds no justification in Mary Wollstonecraft's eyes. She says: "The laws respecting woman, which I mean to discuss in a future part, make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then by the easy transition of only

considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher."[1] Not only a political and a civil existence does she vindicate for woman, but also an economic existence.

She claims for women the right to work, and this demand gives her a place among the thinkers of her century, who foreshadowed the claims of the various socialistic and communistic systems, which characterized the early part of the present century. "Is not that government very defective," she says, "and very unmindful of the happiness of one-half of its members, that does not provide for honest independent women, by encouraging them to fill respectable stations?" How many women waste life away, the prey of discontent, "who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry."[2] The few employments open to women at that time, so far from being liberal, were menial. When women were in possession of superior education, they could take charge of the education of children as governesses; yet these situations were often rendered humiliating. Women, educated like gentlewomen, when forced by necessity to fill them, were looked upon as degraded thereby. This offers a glimpse of economic conditions, in their influence upon the position of woman, in the days before the doctrine, that work is a right and the only legitimate means of retaining an honorable place in society, had made much headway among civilized nations. Mary Wollstonecraft makes the

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 218. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

charge, that men performed their duties by deputies, and women desired above all things to be ladies, which meant, "simply to have nothing to do, but listlessly to go, they scarcely know where, for they cannot tell what."[1]

It was very natural, that Mary Wollstonecraft should dwell upon this aspect of the position of woman; for she herself had, at an early age, been under necessity to provide for her own wants and to aid her family. She had thus learned by experience, that the path of the woman at that time, who must earn her own bread, was far from smooth. Moreover, she had tasted of the fruit of toil in the independence, which it brought, which seemed to her a grand blessing, to be secured, if need be, even at the expense of contracting her wants. Her observations, therefore, had a practical basis. They contain, besides, an element that gives evidence of a grasp upon economic problems, which were at that time barely stated. Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* had pointed to labor, as the source of all economic values. The wide discrepancy between the rights of capital and the proceeds of labor, between the honour attached to station and the pittance allowed to him, who, as proxy, performed the duties of that station, were not only apparent, but were becoming the subject of economic speculation. No socialist or communist, of later days, could have looked with greater dissatisfaction upon the unequal distribution of wealth, than Mary Wollstonecraft. She was undoubtedly acquainted

[1] The Rights of Woman, p. 221.

with Adam Smith's works, though she quotes only from his *Theory of Moral Sentiments.* With much adroitness, she applies his observations concerning the evil effects, morally, upon that part of the community, which is, for some reason exempt from labour, to the morally inferior condition of women.

Mary Wollstonecraft did not live to see three schools of thought arise, each of which, tried, independently of each other, to solve the problems of the social revolution, which went side by side with political revolution. Whatever the divergency, each emphasized the right to labor, and the right to the proceeds of labour. Fourier's elaborate system propounded associated labor, Saint Simon attempted the organization of labor, and Robert Owen sought a practical solution in his *Equitable Labor Exchange.* These systems were to appear some decades later, but even at that time, the elements, that composed them, were in process of evolution in the minds of thinkers. Mary Wollstonecraft proved herself in this direction also, one of the most progressive thinkers of her times; for she wove into her argument the conviction, that there can be no real political advance without a corresponding moral improvement, and that both must rest on a sound economic basis.

CHAPTER X.

The Relation of her views to those of William Godwin and later Socialists.

Professor Menger in his valuable work on the right to the full proceeds of labor, points to William Godwin as the one, who first demonstrated this right in a scientific manner. He says: "Godwin may be regarded as the first scientific socialist of later times; the germs of all the ideas of later socialism and anarchism are to be found in his work. He wielded the most powerful influence over Hall, Owen and Thompson, and through them upon the development of socialism."[1]

There are points of contact between the views of Godwin and those of Mary Wollstonecraft. They were stirred by the same events; the same currents of contemporary thought moulded them. They shared in the tendency of the Revolutionary school toward deification of pure intellect. Both held that reason and virtue are closely allied. Both believed

[1] Dr. Anton Menger: Das Recht an deu vollen Arbeitsertrag in geschichtlicher Darstellung. Stuttgart. 1891, p. 40.

in the perfectibility of the human race. The omnipotence of reason with Godwin involved the abolition of all political institutions. Mary Wollstonecraft did not go to such length. Of anarchy there is no trace in her writings, with the exception perhaps of her last book, *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman.* This was written during the year of her married life with Godwin. She had talked over with him the subject-matter of this book; he was her critic. It may be assumed, therefore, that Godwin's influence is evident in this unfinished novel. Beyond this, it cannot be maintained, that she was indebted to him for her creed, though he was the chief thinker of the political school to which she belonged. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* appeared in 1792, his *Political Justice* was published in 1793. He was at that time as little pleased with her production, as she was with the views, which he had set forth. Personally they seem to have regarded each other in a somewhat antagonistic spirit, during the early days of their acquaintance, when they met at the house of the publisher, Mr. Johnson, where both were frequent guests.

Godwin gives an account of an interview, which shows that they were apt to clash rather than to agree. At the time of the first appearance of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, they both, together with Thomas Paine and several others, were invited to dine at the house of a friend. Godwin wished specially to make the acquaintance of Thomas Paine, who, however, was not a great

talker; and, with the exception of an occasional shrewd remark, did little to gratify Godwin's wish. The conversation lay principally between himself and Mary Wollstonecraft. They touched on a variety of topics, particularly on the character and habits of certain eminent men, among them Voltaire, upon whom she bestowed censure with a plentiful hand, while Godwin was inclined, since Voltaire possessed genius, to the supposition of generous and manly virtue. They also discussed some questions of religion, in which Godwin found her opinions approached much nearer to the received ones, than his own. They separated thoroughly dissatisfied with each other. Godwin says: "I did her the justice, in giving an account of the conversation, though I was not sparing of my blame, to yield her the praise of a person of active and independent thinking. On her side, she did me no part of what perhaps I considered as justice."[1] Godwin's vanity had evidently been stung repeatedly by her sarcasm. He refers to this in a note, accepting the invitation of Miss Hayes to meet her, when, soon after her separation from Imlay, she went once more into society. He wrote: "I will do myself the pleasure of waiting on you on Friday, and shall be happy to meet Mrs. Wollstonecraft, of whom I know not that I ever said a word of harm, and who has frequently amused herself with depreciating me."[2]

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 96.

[2] C. Kegan Paul: Prefatory Memoir to Letters to Imlay, p. LI.

It does not appear in what respect Mary Wollstonecraft found fault with Godwin's philosophy; perhaps with some aspects of his argument in general; perhaps with those portions of his *Political Justice*, which are very radical, and found little acceptance in the minds even of those of his contemporaries, who were otherwise in sympathy with him. In his conception of property, Godwin boldly struck out in new paths. He dealt with marriage as coming under the head of property, and in his treatment of the subject, strikes a blow at the marriage relation as a permanent institution. Among uncivilized races, even to the present day, the wife is regarded as her husband's property. That Godwin should have overlooked the higher conceptions of marriage, evolved among Christian nations, and taken a conception common to the barbarian, as the foundation of his argument on this subject, seems singularly repugnant, even though this discussion is confined to a few pages in a treatise of abstract reasoning. His biographer explains, that Godwin's real objections to marriage are those which are bound up with the whole idea of his book; and "his book gave cohesion and voice to philosophic radicalism; it was the manifesto of a school without which the milder and more creedless liberalism of the present day had not been."[1]

It was not wholly to Mary Wollstonecraft's advantage, that her name, by her marriage to Godwin, became connected with his. Even a writer in our

1 C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries, Vol. I., p. 115.

own day, after an exposition of Godwin's philosophy and his relation to contemporary thought, says: "Godwin's attack upon marriage may be illustrated by the remarkable declaration in favor of woman's rights by Mary Wollstonecraft, afterwards his wife."[1] There is nothing either in the letter or the spirit of her books, written before her marriage to Godwin, that could be construed as an attack upon the family. The divergency between Godwin's views and her attempt to strengthen the ties of family life, where she found them weakest, is great. A strong appreciation of the benefit accruing to the individual and to the nation from pure and healthful family influences, is one of the distinct features of Mary Wollstonecraft's writings. This is especially evident in her views of the education, which best forms the citizen. Not in any sense would she see children deprived of the influences of home to mould character. By granting to women their rights, she firmly believed the home would be emancipated.

It is a remarkable fact, that the influence of the author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* led Godwin to a recognition of the grave defect in his social philosophy. In the preface to the novel *St. Leon*, published two years after his wife's death, Godwin takes occasion to point out the inconsistency between the sentiments expressed in this novel, which exalts the affections and charities of private life, and his *Political Justice*, in which

[1] Leslie Stephen: History of Thought in the Eighteenth Century. London, 1876, Vol. II., p. 276.

they are treated with no great degree of favor. He remarks:

"For four years, I have been anxious for opportunity and leisure to modify some of the earlier chapters of that work in conformity to the sentiments inculcated in this. Not that I see cause to make any change respecting the principle of justice, or anything else fundamental to the system then delivered; but that I apprehend domestic and private affections inseparable from the nature of man, and from what may be styled the culture of the heart, and am fully persuaded that they are not incompatible with a profound and active sense of justice in the mind of him that cherishes them."[1]

This modification of his former expression of extreme views, and the appreciation of the value of domestic relations, may be regarded as the legacy of Mary Wollstonecraft to the philosophy of Godwin.

It is a question, however, whether in modifying Godwin's views, she did not, in turn, adopt from him some of the radical consequences, which he had relentlessly drawn, but which she had thus far left untouched. Does the unfinished novel, *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman*, written under Godwin's influence, contain elements of social disintegration? The purpose of the story, as she says in her preface, is "to exhibit the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society." "In the invention of the story," she adds, "this view restrained my fancy; and the history ought rather to be considered, as of woman, than of an individual." In setting forth the wrongs of women this novel is a master-piece. Every species of wrong that women endure, from

[1] W. Godwin: The Travels of St. Leon, London, 1799.

the series of revolting cruelties and outrage heaped upon the daughter of the outcast, to the refinement of cruelty endured by the daughter of better circumstances, is represented, until the mind of the reader turns with horror from such scenes of degradation.

In this story, as everywhere in her life and in her books, it is apparent that the author belonged to the Revolutionary School. She attacked monarchy and the distinctions of wealth and rank. Her criticism of the educational system of England was caustic and severe. Her experience of family life had been unusually sad. It need not be a matter of surprise therefore, that she placed the institution of the family by the side of other ancient institutions, as in need of reform. She was right in exposing the wrongs, which women suffered within the precincts of the family. The question is, whether she preserved to the last that clear perception, which characterized her earlier works, of the harmonious blending, which is possible between woman's emancipation and the conservative aspects of family life. In seeking to tear up by the root, that which is evil, did she injure the roots that nourish a growth of great value?

Her attack is directed against the excess of power with which the law, at that time, permitted men to subjugate women. The book is not characterized by a heedless sacrifice of the affections, that constitute the sacred ties of family life. Maria, the heroine of the story, supports her father and seeks to advance the interests of her brothers

and sisters. One of the gravest and most vital of all the questions, connected with the subject of the family, is touched, when Maria grieves, because she perceived in her babe a slight resemblance to him, to whom it owed its existence; she longed to purify her child from the heritage of vice, that must have descended to it through its father.[1] Jemima, whose mother died, broken-hearted, at her birth, evidently voices the sentiments of the author regarding the importance of motherhood, in saying: "I cannot help attributing the greater part of my misery to the misfortune of having been thrown into the world without the grand support of life, a mother's affection. I had no one to love me; or to make me respected, to enable me to acquire respect. I was despised from my birth, and denied the chance of obtaining a footing for myself in society."[2] Moreover, in the case of Maria, motherhood proves triumphant mid the wreck of other relations, when she decides to live for her child.

Several minor characters are introduced in the story, to illustrate the fact, that women at that time had not an economic existence in society. Gentle women, as well as honest women of the labouring classes, were all oppressed beyond measure in their attempt to claim for themselves the right to work. Incidentally the history of women is told, whose hard-earned savings were squandered by husbands, who came home but to ill-treat them; for "women

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[1] Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman, Vol. II., p. 107.
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I., p. 90.

have always the worst of it, where law is to decide."

The heroine of the story represents the type of woman, who, though educated, and in possession of wealth, was denied a civil existence. Her husband could violate every vow that bound him to her, and heap outrage upon her; he could rob her with impunity; he could goad her soul almost to madness; he could hunt her from place to place, rob her of her child and imprison her in a madhouse; yet, since he had never struck her, had never threatened her life, she had no resource; the law was on his side, and afforded her neither protection nor redress from the oppressor. The attitude of law-courts toward the crimes of men was indulgent; harshness was characteristic of the treatment received by women.

A serious touch of anarchy is displayed, when Maria, the heroine of the story, takes the law into her own hands. Her reason tells her when to consider her marriage null and void, and her reason again, she thinks, tells her, that since she is free, she has the right to re-marry. Maria says: "If laws exist, made by the strong to oppress the weak, I appeal to my own sense of justice."[1] This reasoning is very much after the manner of Godwin's social philosophy. If his influence had been eliminated, critics would have found less in the book that could rightly be considered objectionable. Those rationalistic principles, which make reason in every question the arbiter, were introduced where crys-

[1] Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman, Vol. II., p. 153.

tallization into practice is beset with most dangerous consequences. The author displays here too strong a tendency to consider the rights of the individual as of primary importance; she gives a secondary place to the claim of civilized humanity, upon a just appreciation of the sanctity of the marriage-vow, when once taken. This feature of anarchy mars the last service, which Mary Wollstonecraft sought to render the cause of woman.

A tone pervades the speculations of a century ago, concerning the antagonism between woman's personal freedom and the binding nature of the marriage tie, that cannot be called morally refreshing. Liberty is a glorious possession, but the point that marks its transition to license is almost imperceptible. Mary Wollstonecraft preserved even to the last an attitude that compares favorably with others, whose speculations were directed toward the same end. There was much extraneous matter of an objectionable kind in the writings of the early socialists; but this should not be regarded as belonging to the essence of the movement. By eliminating the mercenary element which enters so largely the considerations of marriage; by relieving the drudgery of women, both indoors and out of doors, the tendency of socialism should be to make woman the happy and cultured friend and companion of man. Kirkup claims that the socialism of to-day is but "the economic and social side of a vaster movement, which in politics is democracy, and in ethics means toleration, humanity, and unselfish service to society."[1]

[1] Thomas Kirkup: An Inquiry into Socialism, 1887, p. 1.

While the aim of socialism is toward the renovation and progress of the entire human society, it is not therefore in its central principle adverse to marriage and the family.

It may not be possible, at this distance of time, to determine whether the works of Mary Wollstonecraft were known to the leaders of socialistic thought; and whether she wielded even some slight influence over them. When civilization is ripe for the introduction of new measures, the same thought springs up in different guise in various places. Her works were probably known to Saint Simon, who was in Paris, during the time of her sojourn there in 1793. He shared the fate of Mary Wollstonecraft's friend, Count Schlabrendorf, who, as a victim of the Revolution, was imprisoned. She often visited her friend in prison and may have been acquainted with Saint Simon. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had appeared but recently in French translation in Paris, and had probably come to the notice of Saint Simon. Another edition appeared simultaneously in Lyons, the home of Fourier, who at that time had commenced to elaborate his social scheme, which included the emancipation of woman.

Ten years later, in 1803, Saint Simon published the first exposition of his system in his *Lettres d'un habitant de Geneve a ses contemporains.* A sentence occurs in this pamphlet, which gives to woman the right to cast her vote in the new association, and the right to be elected to its offices. After Saint Simon's death the school, which bears his name, insisted

on allowing women an equal share in the rights of their associated labour. In 1830 the Saint Simonians published a manifesto, in which they defined their general position, and with regard to their attitude toward woman they say: "Christianity has released woman from servitude but has condemned her to religious, political and civil inferiority. The Saint Simonians have announced her emancipation, but they have not abolished the sacred law of marriage, proclaimed by Christianity. On the contrary, they give a new sanctity to this law."[1] The popularity of Saint Simonism was greatly increased by this manifesto. Many prominent men, who had thus far ridiculed the school, now became its supporters. "The dogma of reward, according to individual ability and work, carried with it the force of conviction; and the prospect of the abolition of all privileges of birth, with the emancipation, political and economic, of the working man and of woman, charmed the minds of men."[2] A year later a schism of a deplorable nature took place in the Saint Simonian Church, because Enfantin, who, with Bazard, had been leader of the assemblies, made propositions concerning the position of woman in their midst, which forced Bazard and many others of the best members, both men and women, to withdraw.

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[1] Quoted by R. T. Ely, Ph. D.: French and German Socialism in Modern Times.

[2] Dr. Otto Warschauer: Saint Simon und der Saint Simonismus. Leipzig, 1892.

Concerning Robert Owen, the English communist, we have direct evidence, that he was acquainted with the views of Mary Wollstonecraft. He was well known in the Godwin household. Fanny tells Mary, who, with Shelley, was at that time sojourning by Lake Geneva, in company with Lord Byron, in a long letter, dated July 29, 1816, of Owen's plans; of his address to the people of New Lanark, delivered on the opening of the Institution for the Formation of Character; of impending riots and 26,000 men out of employment; and of the hopes which Mr. Owen was holding out of a speedy renovation of society, by reason of his schemes. She speaks of his proposition that no human being should work more than three hours every day; and after discussing this and other aspects of his system, she closes by saying: "So much for Mr. Owen, who is, indeed, a very great and good man. He told me the other day that he wished our mother was living, as he had never met with a person, who thought so exactly as he did, or who would have so warmly and zealously entered into his plans." [1]

It is not difficult to link the leading thoughts of Mary Wollstonecraft's argument with the socialistic ideals of the present time. Socialism is generally understood to mean the systematic interference of the state in favor of the suffering classes. Laveleye affirms this in defining socialism thus: "In the first place, every socialistic

[1] Mrs. Julian Marshall: The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. Volume I, p. 150.

doctrine aims at introducing greater equality in social conditions, and, in the second place, at realizing those reforms by the law or the state." To a remarkable degree Mary Wollstonecraft looked to the state, and to an active public and social spirit, as the means of checking the excessive development of private and individual interests. She realized that when the unnatural claims of a small minority yielded to a more equitable distribution of duty, and of opportunities of enjoyment, women would, to a large degree, share in the consequent possibilities of development. "Greater equality in social conditions," expresses the demand, which, if granted, would abolish the causes which rendered women weak and oppressed.

Not only in their general tendency the views of Mary Wollstonecraft may be linked to the socialism of later times, but also in some of the particular measures, which have characterized its development. She looks to government to perform functions, which thus far had not been assumed by any state. Some of her demands seem to point to the central government of the socialistic system, which controls not only large industrial factors, but also extends to a systematic employment of individuals. The state is to ensure woman's position, to educate her, to extend the franchise to her, to give her not only a political existence but also an economic existence, by opening out to her opportunities for work.

Socialism has ever made war upon that fundamentally erroneous assumption, that labour is a

weariness and a degradation; upon that false ideal of position and honour, that makes directly against the enjoyment that should result from useful service. In this respect also Mary Wollstonecraft is in touch with socialistic ideas. Looking for a time when duties would no longer be performed by deputies, but each man would stand or fall, according to his faithfulness to duty, she ranges woman in the common ranks of human beings, where she also will receive honor in accordance to the duties which she performs. She would not see the influences of home life crushed to give place to the rank and file of an industrial army. Woman's duty would largely be to the family.

There is a vast difference between this ideal of a life of service and the conditions with which Mary Wollstonecraft was at war. No longer the toy of man, no longer his slave, but raised to the dignity of conscious, voluntary service, woman with her foot firmly planted in the home as the center, would render service to mankind in ever widening circles, with that enlightened love of humanity, of which Mary Wollstonecraft saw so little trace in the women of her times. This was the picture on which her imagination dwelt.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RECEPTION OF HER WORK IN GERMANY.

THE reception given to the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in Germany differs, to a considerable degree, from that which was tendered it on its own native soil. In England there was a very lively appreciation of the fact that the book proclaimed a new system. The revolutionary spirit had taken hold of a pronounced party among the English people; measures of reform were the topic of the day. The mind was therefore on the alert and ready to grasp the situation, when there were proposals of reform sufficiently far-reaching and complete to herald the advent of some new system.

In Germany the conditions were different. Long years of warfare had left behind a degree of devastation, from which the country recovered but slowly. The fire of patriotic love was nourished in the hearts of all; and the ability of literary men and statesmen alike began to be directed to the one absorbing topic of the following decades: The consolidation of the nation. The thoughts that

fermented in the minds of the French in their Revolution, and which had their effect upon the more quiet and practical Englishman, did not pass the German by without calling forth an effect, which bore its distinct national imprint. The *Sturm und Drang Periode* in Germany wrestled with the questions that occupied the thought of the end of the Eighteenth Century and the beginning of the present century. Kant, but barely understood in England, had begun to wield far-reaching influence upon German thought; the ethical rigor of his *categorical imperative* giving a healthier tone to the conception of duty and obligation of even the man of lesser education.

Meantime German women, with the exception of those of royal rank, seldom ventured beyond the seclusion of private life. England was not without its female authors of some importance. In France the Salons, presided over by gifted women, each of whom having, as Voltaire remarked, one or two authors at her side as ministers, were centers of intellectual activity, later of degeneracy. This product of French civilization, though French manners and customs were much imitated in Germany, refused to thrive on German soil. Woman in Germany found her sphere in the home, and showed little craving for more extended activities. She fostered a high sense of family relations, and thereby contributed a valuable source of strength to the depleted resources of the nation.

The German critic of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* scarcely realized, that he had a

book before him, which enunciated a new system. The propositions against which the English critic warned the public, seemed to the German critic mere exaggérations, which might well be overlooked, since the book contained so much that was sensible and wise. The attitude of the English press furnished distinct evidence, that the public realized, that the book marked an epoch. There is no evidence of this kind in the notices given in German periodicals. Germany was not in touch with this latest current of progressive thought. Moreover there was no indication of symptoms of unrest and dissatisfaction on the part of the German woman, that might have given cause for anxiety, lest the book incite to insubordination those, who had not yet learned to question the injustice of their inferior position.

Only one critic seems to have grasped the significance of the book as the herald of a new era, and he is not sparing in his denunciation. The conservative attitude of the German woman allays any fears, however, that might have alarmed him. He says: "It is not worth while losing any more words about this phantastic system. Its mere presentation is its best refutation. Those who will protest most urgently against the realization of this plan will be the women themselves."[1] He cannot understand how a woman could demand for her sex the same rights, which men enjoy, unless she should prove to be a haughty, heartless fanatic, incapable of a full conception of the advantages

[1] Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung. October, 1794.

of her sex, and therefore willing to sacrifice them in order to be as men are. He regards the distinction of sex an inexhaustible source of enjoyment, culture, study and true humanity; and thus enunciates an argument which has, perhaps, been used to a greater degree by the Germans than by other nationalities; and certainly has great weight, when urged by those, who have granted equal rights to the fullest extent.

It must be regarded as a circumstance of a gratifying nature, that Mary Wollstonecraft was introduced to the German public by Salzmann, one of the most noted men in the pedagogy of the times. A cordial feeling of interest evidently existed between them. She had rendered his *Moralisches Elementarbuch* into English in a way that secured it large circulation, and he, in turn, was prepared to use his influence to secure for her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* a favorable reception in Germany. Salzmann commanded respect, not only as an educator, but also as a philanthropist. Some of his books, written for the young, enjoyed great popularity. In his institution at Schnepfenthal, near Gotha, he educated children of both sexes in accordance with the same pedagogical views, which were emphasized in his writings. He made conformity to nature the basis of his educational system, and his methods were characterized by a spirit of philanthropy.

There were many points of contact between the views of Salzmann and those of Mary Wollstonecraft. Yet this very agreement makes it the more

apparent, how far Mary Wollstonecraft was in advance of the opinions, which, in that day, even an educator and philanthropist like Salzmann held concerning woman. He had supplied the translation, which was made by one of the teachers in the institution at Schnepfenthal, with occasional notes, and a preface, in which he intimates that he had "taken the liberty of contradicting the honored authoress in several of her assertions." He agrees with her to a large extent and thereby taxes the patience of the above-mentioned critic, who wished that Salzmann had exposed the fallacies of the system, instead of indulging in words of empty praise. Yet it is true, that in every leading point where Mary Wollstonecraft expresses opinions, that belong to our own times rather than to Salzmann's days, he seeks to tone down, and to weaken what she expresses. Thus he agrees with her that female education should receive more attention, but thinks that "the study of such sciences, which demand continuous application of thought, would make a girl too abstract and sober-minded, and therefore unfit to fill her destined place in life." [1] He guards the supremacy of man and insists that women must obey their husbands.

It is not therefore surprising that several of the German critics were well pleased with his work as

[1] Rettung der Rechte des Weibes, mit Bemerkungen ueber politische und moralische Gegenstände von Maria Wollstonecraft. Aus dem Englischen uebersetzt. Mit einigen Anmerkungen und einer Vorrede von Christian Gotthilf Salzmann. Schnepfenthal, im Verlag der Erziehungsanstalt 1793. Vol. I, p. 69.

commentator. One of them expresses himself as follows: "The undertaking of the translator should not by any means be censured, for he has given us in translation the work of a keen-witted British woman, in which her noble heart also shines forth. Her assertions, indeed, are not always of the same value, but generally where she required reproof, Mr. Salzmann administered it in notes, which display the far-sighted pedagogue."[1] Another of the periodicals of the times considers the book of sufficient value to have been brought before the German public in a translation, but does not fail to mention the exaggerated assertions, which the author, carried away by a very ardent enthusiasm for the rights of her sex, was led to make. Since the comments of Salzmann were thought to have neutralized these exaggerations, the book was commended to the attention of the reader.[2] Another critic thinks this book, characterized by vigorous thought concerning an important subject, though not without exaggeration, was worthy of a translation; but considers the author at fault when, in her earnest endeavour to show that women are human beings, she seems to forget that they are not men, but women.[3]

A very appreciative notice of the book speaks of ideas exaggerated and one-sided, and propositions unattainable and chimerical; and then proceeds to

[1] Seiler: Gemeinnützige Betrachtungen der neuesten Schriften. 1793.

[2] Erlanger Gelehrte Zeitung. October 1793.

[3] Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen, September, 1793.

set forth the intrinsic value of the production in high terms. This critic expresses himself as not satisfied with the work of the translator nor with the notes of Salzmann. He seems to have read the book in English and claims that this work, beyond most other products of modern English literature, deserved a translation into the German language.[1]

Most of the German critics recognized the defects of the book as a literary production, especially the lack of order in its arrangement. They appreciated its value both as a work on female education and a criticism of existing conditions. That which seemed strange and new they characterized as exaggerations, far from realizing that the book contained the announcement of a new system. This tends to show that it was essentially a product of English thought, with distinctive marks of English national life impressed upon it.

Two Germans, who were at the time of the publication of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* residing in England, furnish evidence of the impression, which the work made upon minds of different stamp. One was the philosopher, Franz von Baader, who regarded the argument of the book after the manner of a philosopher. He writes concerning it in his Diary, December 26, 1792: "I feel very much stirred in mind. Scales are still falling from my eyes! All misuse of power, all usurpation must absolutely vanish from society if virtue is to

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[1] Neue Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek. Volume IX, p. 127—132.

be in it and remain in it."[1] To him one of the great questions of life had been as to the way in which virtue could rule human society; he had found in Mary Wollstonecraft's book an answer from a direction, whence he had perhaps least looked for it.

Inspired by different motives, the traveller, Küttner, in his volume on the state of civilization in England, gives a sketch of the author of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* The search for truth was not the mission that had led him to visit England. He gathered notable facts and conditions, as he found them in his travels, into narratives that might prove attractive to the ordinary reader. He told the German public about Mary Wollstonecraft, because she and her work were the talk of the day. He would not call attention to the book, he says, if it contained nothing but strange, original ideas and wild projects; but since it was really in many respects noteworthy and betrayed a degree of genius, which few women possessed, he found it demanded attention. He repeats some of the gossip current about Mary Wollstonecraft, mentions "her state of dissatisfaction with men and things, her disappointed hopes and her sour temper."[2] His expression, that she had "none of the characteristics of woman but her sex," was quoted in the news and notes of a German fashion journal, where an account is given of the founding of a school in

[1] Franz von Baader's Nachgelassene Werke. Vol. 1, p. 202.

[2] K. G. Küttner: Beiträge zur Kenntniss des Innern von England, Vol. IV, p. 121.

Paris, where girls could learn the art of printing. She is mentioned in this connection as having made the demand, that women should be allowed, just as men are, to learn various industries and to study arts and professions.[1]

A search in the books and periodicals of the period discloses no trace of the disparagement, with which Mary Wollstonecraft met in England. Salzmann translated her memoirs and published them with a preface by himself.[2] The misfortunes of her life were mentioned by German contemporaries as cause for regret, not for derision. And even during the period, when in England she was misrepresented or forgotten, German writers were more just. Klemm, in his work descriptive of the place of woman in the history of civilization,[3] makes full mention of her. He regards her work however as of pedagogical value only, and has no appreciation for her work as 'vindicator of the rights of her sex.

There is one personal relation on record, which Mary Wollstonecraft had with one of German birth, that is of peculiar interest. Godwin mentions it in connection with the friendships, which his wife formed during her sojourn in Paris, conspicuous

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[1] Journal des Luxus und der Moden. August, 1795.

[2] Denkschrift auf Maria Wollstonecraft Godwin, die Vertheidigerin der Rechte des Weibes, von William Godwin. Ans dem Englischen übersetzt und mit einigen Anmerkungen begleitet. Nebst dem Bildnisse der Verstorbenen. Schnepfenthal, im Verlage der Buchhandlung der Erziehungsanstalt, 1799.

[3] G. Klemm: Die Frauen, Culturgeschichtliche Schilderungen 1859. Vol. VI, p. 188—191.

among which was, "the sincere friendship between her and Helen Maria Williams, author of a collection of poems of uncommon merit, who at that time resided in Paris." He continues: "Another person, of whom Mary always spoke in terms of ardent commendation, both for the excellence of his disposition, and the force of his genius, was a Count Slabrendorf, by birth, I believe, a Swede."[1] Gustav, Graf von Schlabrendorf, was a native of Stettin in Prussia, who during the time of the French Revolution resided in Paris. He was a philanthropist and was somewhat eccentric. In touch with the Girondists, he shared the fate of those, who, though ardent republicans in principle, were humane and benevolent in sentiment, and therefore became victims of the fury of the Jacobins. Schlabrendorf was imprisoned for eighteen months and barely escaped execution.

His tribute to Mary Wollstonecraft was published nearly forty years after the short season of their acquaintance. Count Schlabrendorf had an intimate friend, Carl Gustav Jochmann, with whom he conversed about many notable events and persons, and who thought these conversations of sufficient value to take notes of them. As a mark of special confidence, evidently, Schlabrendorf told him of his acquaintance with Mary Wollstonecraft. Jochmann says: "My honored friend gave to me *William Godwin's Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, (2nd edition, London 1798) in which he had marked many

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 102.

passages and had added marginal notes, some of which I have included in the above sketch. He therefore showed the book to but few of his best friends. Humboldt had it for a time. 'Perhaps you will occasionally smile,' said the Count, as he handed it to me. But how mistaken he was? I was deeply touched by it."[1]

Jochmann had evidently retained a copy of those marginal notes, when he returned the book to Schlabrendorf. These, with a sketch of the life of Mary Wollstonecraft, as he had heard it related by Schlabrendorf, and had found it in her Memoirs, came into the hands of Heinrich Zschokke, when, in 1836, he made selections for publication from the papers of his late friend, Jochmann. They found a place in the volume under preparation.

Those marginal notes, made by Schlabrendorf, are of biographical value. They are a testimony from one, who knew her well, both as to the womanliness of Mary Wollstonecraft and the high regard, which she inspired at a time, when Imlay, whom she had trusted, proved faithless. After speaking of the suffering, which she incurred by the position taken in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* scorned even by the members of her own sex, because she had dared to make war upon the gray monster of public opinion, Count Schlabrendorf continues: "And yet, Mary was the noblest, purest and most thoughtful woman

[1] Carl Gustav Jochmann's Reliquien. Aus seinen Nachgelassenen Papieren. Gesammelt von Heinrich Zschokke. 1836. Vol. I., p. 194.

whom I have ever met. I knew her well, even before the time of my imprisonment, during the reign of terror. Mary was not a dazzling beauty, but she was of charming grace. Her face, so full of expression, presented a style of beauty beyond that of merely regular features. There was fascination in her look, her voice and her movement. While in prison, she often visited me; she attracted me more and more. Not until after she had left Paris, did I become conscious of the fact that I loved her. Her unhappy relations with Imlay interfered with any closer connections with her." [1]

There is pathos in this brief record of a friendship, formed mid the bloodshed and terror of the revolution, strengthened by visits in prison, where each hour might have brought the call to the Guillotine. Mary went her way to mourn the faithlessness of Imlay, to form new connections and then to die. Schlabrendorf remained behind to ponder the radiance that had been shed abroad in the gloom of his imprisonment by the choice spirit, which had fled. He treasured her Memoirs. In the margin he penned the words of tribute, which during his lifetime he showed only to his dearest friends. After his death they were given to the world.

Nearly a year after the first appearance of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* a series of publications began to issue from the pen of a German author, which distinctly characterizes him as one, who then gave expression to modern theories of the emancipation of woman. A diligent

[1] *Ibid*, p. 195.

search has not brought to light any direct evidence that this author was influenced by the views of Mary Wollstonecraft; but the accumulation of indirect evidence is so great, that it does not seem difficult to construe an hypothesis to that effect. The author in question is Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, born in Gerdauen in Prussia, 1741, known specially by his work, *Ueber die Ehe*, of which four editions appeared during his lifetime, and which continues to be read to-day, as is manifest in its publication in cheap form in *Reclam's Universal Bibliothek.*

An hypothesis that Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel was indebted for a radical change in his views to the views of Mary Wollstonecraft, expressed in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, may be supported by a threefold argument. First: There is a coincidence as to time between the appearance of her book and the change in his views. Second: It would not have been foreign to the literary character of Hippel to have drawn heavily upon the resources of another author, without making due acknowledgment of his indebtedness. Third: The divergency between his views given to the public previous to 1792 and those expressed after that date, is so wide, that every critic has looked upon this as a problem toward the solution of which some theory should be offered. It remains to be seen whether the theory that Hippel borrowed from Mary Wollstonecraft does not meet with a larger degree of probability than any other that has yet been framed.

The coincidence as to time is an important factor in the argument. Both the first edition of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and of Hippel's third edition of *Ueber die Ehe*, which contains the first sign of a change in his views, bear as the date of publication the year 1792. It is of first importance, therefore, to show that early in the year 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft's work had been accessible to Hippel. The first notice of her work in English periodicals is probably that in the *Analytical Review* for March 1792, for Mr. Joseph Johnson, the publisher of this Review, was the friend of Mary Wollstonecraft and the publisher of all her works. But there are dates in personal letters and in her Memoirs, which place beyond a doubt the supposition, that her book was published, if not toward the latter part of 1791, at least very early in the year 1792. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* appeared in November 1790. Mary Wollstonecraft's reply, as the first of the many replies, must have been published early in 1791. Godwin says: "Mary accordingly proceeded, in a short time after, to the composition of her most celebrated production, *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*[1] Even though it may be difficult to accept without limitation Godwin's statement, that this latter book was written in the incredibly short space of six weeks' time, it may be regarded as having been ready for the publisher about the middle of the year

[1] W. Godwin: Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 79.

1791. Other data would corroborate this. In September 1791, she removed from the house which she occupied in George Street to a more commodious apartment in Store Street,[1] where she remained until she went to France toward the end of 1792. During the more than twelve months of residence in Store Street, Godwin says,[2] she produced nothing but a few articles in the *Analytical Review*. Her literary meditations were directed toward the sequel to the *Rights of Woman*, of which only a few hints however were found among her papers after her death. It is therefore certain that in September 1791, if not earlier, the manuscript of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was in the hands of her publisher, and more than this, according to Godwin's statement, the book was at that time before the public. In November 1791, he and Mary Wollstonecraft met as guests at the house of a friend. Godwin remarks concerning this interview: "I had not read her Rights of Woman, and had hardly looked into her Answer to Burke."[3]

The French translation of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had been published previous to June 1792. This is apparent from a letter from the author to her sister Everina, dated London, June 20th, 1792, in which she speaks of her intended trip to France and continues: "I shall be introduced to many people, my book has been translated and praised in some popular prints."[4] Both the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 93. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 99. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[4] C. Kegan Paul: William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries, 1876. Vol. I., p. 206.

French editions of her book, the one in Paris and the other in Lyons, were published in 1792. A second edition in London and an American edition also appeared in 1792.

It therefore appears that Hippel would have had time to take cognizance of this new work and then to prepare a third edition of his *Ueber die Ehe* and publish it even in the year 1792. The first edition of this work appeared in 1774, containing 229 pages, the second in 1775 containing 319 pages. Seventeen years elapsed, before the third edition was published, in 1792, much enlarged, containing 426 pages, and altered especially in the fifth chapter, "On Supremacy in the Marriage Relation." The fourth edition increased to 501 pages, appeared in 1793, and completes the change that had been commenced in the third edition. In the following year, 1794, his work, *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber*, made its appearance, demanding for women the rights of men in the state, in their education and in the choice of employments. Hippel died in April 1796, but fragments on the same subject, found among his papers, were published as *Nachlass über weibliche Bildung*, Berlin 1801.

Beginning with the year 1792 then, and continuing for three years, until his death, Hippel unfolded remarkable literary activity in advocating the emancipation of woman. Evidently in order to make room for this, he discontinued the writing of his autobiography. A diary, which he had begun one and one half years previously, was laid aside about the middle of the year 1792. The German period-

icals bring no notice of the third edition of *Ueber die Ehe* during 1792. One of the earliest reviews of the book occurs in the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, Mai 1793, where the attention of the reader is called to the remarkable change in the opinions of the author since the publication of previous editions. It would seem then, that this book which marked the change, appeared in print later than the French translation of *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* The coincidences as to time, therefore, admit of the hypothesis that Hippel's views were influenced by those of Mary Wollstonecraft.

It is not a light charge, however, to make against the literary character of an author, to say that he borrowed from one, who had but just won her first laurels in authorship, without making acknowledgment. This charge would have to be put aside unhesitatingly, if Hippel's literary career did not offer a spectacle, unique in the history of literature. The publication of his works was strictly anonymous. Not even his publisher, F. C. Voss in Berlin, was aware of the real name of the author. Public curiosity tried at different times to force the author to disclose his secret, but in vain. He fought for his right to anonymity, circumvented those who came dangerously near the truth in their conjectures, and somewhat unscrupulously represented others as the authors of his books. Not even his most intimate friends knew all he had written; some knew of his authorship of one book, others of another. After his death strife arose. His friends

found they had been deceived. Schlichtegroll, his biographer, sought to restore peace and a year after Hippel's death addresses the injured friends: "Forgive, ye noble ones, this trait of his character. He was not a man after the ordinary type; yet he never sought to injure anyone." [1]

Borowski tried to speak the final word concerning Hippel's authorship, in a pamphlet, in which he gives "a complete and wholly reliable list of the writings of Hippel." [2] His assurance, however, that these books "were undoubtedly his productions and he their sole author," [3] received slight recognition. "Hippel," as a later writer, has said, "gave occasion for a contest by means of pamphlets, such as probably never was waged concerning the literary character of a German author." [4] Two pamphlets especially give evidence of the heat of the conflict, one by his former friend attacking him,[5] the other,[6] probably by his friend Scheffner, trying to break the force of the accusations.

The biographical volume which accompanies the complete edition of Hippel's works, characterizes

[1] Schlichtegroll: Nekrolog, 1796; Volume II, pp. 171-346. 1797; Vol. I., pp. 123-414.

[2] Ludwig Ernst Borowski: Ueber das Autorschicksal des Verfassers des Buches über die Ehe. Königsberg 1797. p. 2.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[4] Theodor Mundt: Zeitgenossen, Vol. IV. p. 146. Leipzig 1833.

[5] W. G. Keber: Nachrichten und Bemerkungen den Geheimen Kriegsrath von Hippel betreffend. Königsberg, 1802.

[6] Epistolische Lektion für den Herrn Ertz-Priester Keber, dessen Nachtrag zur Biographie des geheimen Kriegsrath von Hippel betreffend. Danzig, 1804.

in a short preface, the position of Hippel's biographer, Schlichtegroll, as difficult, and points to the "critique on a grand scale"[1] exercised by Theodor Mundt, 40 years after Hippel's death. Mundt pursues the psychological method and shows how the ideal side of Hippel's life was in a state of unremittent friction with the material side, "so that his character in fact represents a tragedy of contradictions."[2] These contradictions in his life are to explain the peculiar aspects of his authorship. Undoubtedly they do to some extent; yet the facts remain unaltered. Mundt admits, that not only the ideas of Kant, but also the thoughts of other friends were utilized in Hippel's writings.

Kant was called upon, after Hippel's death, to explain how the ideas of his system, before it had been published, had found their way into Hippel's works. He made a statement in the *Allgemeiner Literarisher Anzeiger*, 1797, in which he speaks of Hippel as an intimate friend, and does not deny, that fragments of his philosophy, which had found their way into his lectures and the note-books of his students, had been used, in a popularized form, in one of Hippel's best works.[3] An hypothesis was discussed in literary journals, as to whether the great philosopher was the author of the *Book on Marriage.* Kant's emphatic denial however, ended this discussion.

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[1] Hippel's Werke, Berlin bei G. Reimer, 1828-1838. Vorwort zu Band XII.

[2] Theodor Mundt: Zeitgenossen. Vol. IV, pp. 150.

[3] Lebenslaüfe nach aufsteigender Linie, 4 Vols. 1778—1781.

The reason given by Hippel for his insistance upon anonymity, was that a literary career was inconsistent with the interests of his political career. It is difficult to determine whether it was plagiarism of which Hippel was guilty toward Kant and others of his friends; or whether judgment should be tempered, and all that might seem to verge upon literary theft be looked upon as his own peculiar way of literary production. In any case, it is not difficult in view of the circumstances, to suppose that the fresh thought of a gifted Englishwoman, on a subject which had previously been regarded by him in a very different light, was welcomed by him and to some extent appropriated.

Several theories have been put forth to account for the change in Hippel's views. At the time of the first appearance of his *Civil Amelioration of Women*, conjectures were made, not only as to the authorship, but as to the intentions of the author. Was it all meant as irony? One of the literary journals of the times considers at length the *pros* and *cons* of the supposition that the book was written in a playful humour, but decides that it cannot be thus interpreted and must be regarded as sober truth.[1] Not even Borowski could with certainty give information on this point, and admits his ignorance.

Schlichtegroll seeks an explanation in Hippel's veneration for the Empress Katharine II. of Russia, of whom he speaks with great praise in his later works. But according to Hippel's autobiography,

[1] Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung, December 1794.

he was filled with enthusiastic regard for her even while a young man, during his stay in St. Petersburg, in 1760. This then could hardly explain his altered opinions.

Emil Brenning[1] advances a theory to the effect that the change might be interpreted as having had a cause of a personal nature. Hippel, in his earlier years, loved a woman, at the time above him in station, to whom for reasons not explained by his biographers, he was never married. His love for her led him to abandon the study of theology and engage in the study of law. This attachment thus had a most decisive influence upon his career. Eleven years had passed since the days of his disappointment, when he published the first edition of his *Book on Marriage*. It might be supposed therefore, that neither his acrid remarks about women in his earlier work, nor his championship in their cause in later years, had any relation to this episode of his youth. Brenning also points to the influence of the writings of Rousseau, which is very apparent in the later works of Hippel. But Rousseau's ideas concerning the place given by nature to woman are irreconcilable with her political emancipation.

It would be a difficult undertaking to account for the change in Hippel's views by pointing to a spirit of investigation on this subject in his own country. There was a book, *Ueber die Weiber*, which appeared anonymously in 1787, and gave a scathing criticism of the manners, disposition and

[1] Einleitung zu Hippel's "Ueber die Ehe" Leipzig 1812, p. XXX.

character of women. At the close of his work the author makes an appeal: "To you now, O men, will I speak. You are responsible for nearly all the defects which I find in women. Woman is not made to govern herself. It is your vocation to rule."[1] Four years later another book[2] appeared anonymously, which seems to have had the object of opposing and contradicting the author of *Ueber die Weiber*. Judging by the review given in one of the German periodicals[3] of that time, this work, though not radical, was yet liberal in its views regarding women. Still another work,[4] written by an acquaintance of Hippel, discussed the position of woman in the age of Homer.

Granting the widest scope to the possible influence of the writer who opposed the author of *Ueber die Weiber*, the enthusiasm of the social reformer, which pervades Hippel's later writings, cannot have been a product of German thought and development. Moreover, why should Hippel have been, in this direction, the most progressive of all his countrymen? It does not seem probable that the Burgomaster of a Prussian City, who had never been married, and in his earlier days had written many a harsh sentence about the inferiority of women, should have become the advocate of

[1] Ueber die Weiber. (von E. Brandes) Weidmann, Leipzig, 1787, p. 295.

[2] Mann und Weib nach ihren gegenseitigen Verhältnissen geschildert. Leipzig, 1791.

[3] Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek. Vol. 101, p. 133.

[4] Geschichte der Weiber im heroischen Zeitalter, von Karl Gotthold Lenz, Hannover. 1790.

their emancipation after having arrived at the maturity, which fifty years of life is apt to bring, unless some striking external influence had been brought to bear upon him. There was something in the change, wrought in Hippel, which seemed foreign to his nature and passed the comprehension of his friends. Though each one of the theories, heretofore advanced, may have something in its favor, there still remains a strong element unaccounted for, which supports the hypothesis that the change in Hippel's views was due to the work of Mary Wollstonecraft.

It remains now to compare the earlier and later editions of Hippel's *Buch über die Ehe*, and to show from his last work, that in his demands and expectations he was as radical as Mary Wollstonecraft.

A comparison between the second and fourth edition of Hippel's *Buch über die Ehe* gives evidence of modifications throughout the whole work, and in the chapter on "Supremacy in the Marriage Relation," he directly contradicts in his last edition what he maintained in his second edition. Such sentences as the following represent the key-note of Hippel's previous ideas: "Even though your husband may have less understanding than you have, madam, it makes no difference. He is lord in the house."[1] In the later editions this sentence is much modified. A new passage is inserted just preceding it, in which the author points out, that it is not in accordance with the

[1] Ueber die Ehe. Zweite Auflage, Berlin, 1776, p. 142.

destiny of man, that Eve should be subordinate to Adam, but that the supremacy of man merely proves, that reason has not yet been given full sway, so that woman is still in Egyptian bondage, though her Canaan will yet appear to her. He then adds: "Until that time comes, madam, if you please, have patience, even though your husband may have less understanding than you."[1] In the old edition he claimed that obedience to the will of the husband was not to be regarded as an arbitrary demand at the hands of women, but one dictated by nature. In the new edition he comforts them by telling them, that men in their capacity as citizens, sacrifice some of their legitimate rights, not without advantage to themselves, and that therefore women should be prepared to meet evils on a smaller scale in their household.[2] This is very different from the almost rude tone in which he, in the earlier editions, says: "It is unnatural for women to rule, and if they do rule, it is indecent to show it; for the partners of the marriage compact are not equals." [3]

Hippel's last work, his *Civil Amelioration of Women*, is a more dignified production than his *Book on Marriage*. The author rises from the level of amusing his readers by witty sallies at the expense of women, to a height that puts him in touch with thoughts and deeds more than a century in advance of his own times. The references in this book to history, anthropology,

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[1] Ueber die Ehe. Nachdruck der Vierten Auflage (1793) Brockhaus, Leipzig, 1872, p. 101.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

and the detail of judicial and political administration show that the author was at home in various branches of knowledge, and had a wide acquaintance with the current literature of his own nation, as well as of England and France.

Amid the discussion of a large variety of subjects in the *Civil Amelioration of Women*, the author does not lose sight of his object. After seeming digressions, he comes back to the plea that not only women but men also have lost by the degradation of women. "How great a pity," he exclaims, "that so much of progress should have been checked by the cruelty of men! What an abundance of force women must possess, to have faced even until now such numerous obstacles with so much of fortitude!"[1] Hippel unhesitatingly demonstrated that woman's position before the law was anomalous. "We deny them the right to be persons,"[2] he says, and again: "Women have only one court of appeal: God."[3] He adds, that while the law places women under the restraint of perpetual guardianship, and is slow to grant to them as persons, or as holders of property, the rights of citizens, in respect to punishment no distinction of sex is made. Female weakness ceases to be weakness when crime and retribution is under consideration.

His demands, urged with less vehemence and earnestness than those of Mary Wollstonecraft, were equally radical. With regard to the education of

[1] Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber, Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1794, p. 79.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 404. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

women, he says: "Until a new order of things has been introduced on a broad scale in society, admit, ye men, the sooner the better, the girls and young women of the present day to our institutions of learning, and permit them to take part in the instruction here offered without the fear that evil consequences might follow." [1] He would see women free in the choice of a profession and asks: "When will the right to personal choice of activities cease to be the royal privilege of men?" [2]

His confidence in the skill and wisdom, which women would develop, if admitted to the offices of the State, is almost unlimited. The ready tact which they display in society, the faithfulness to duty which, as even men, he says,[3] must certify, marks the administration of their households, seem to Hippel a guarantee that in the administration of the State, their co-operation would prove to be a valuable adjunct. The tyranny and greed of gain in official circles, which he describes in unsparing terms, would then, he believes, yield to a more equitable administration. Women were to be trained for the State. In this demand he coincides with Mary Wollstonecraft, and both thereby give expression to an idea born of the French Revolution. Hippel says: "Away with the wall of partition! Train citizens for the State without regard to the distinctions of sex. Leave that which women should know as house-wives and mothers to special training and then all will return to the order of nature." [4]

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[1] Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber, p. 252.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 108. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 335. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 230.

Mary Wollstonecraft, young, enthusiastic, ardent with the zeal of the reformer, and a member of the school of Revolutionists in England, saw the connection between the claim of the French Republicans for the rights of man and its complement, the rights of woman. Her work was the product of her personality and her times, with not a contradictory note in it. Was it a reproduction of her sentiments when Hippel, in almost the very words used by her in the dedication of her book, attacks the new constitution of the Republicans, "because they saw fit to exclude a full one-half of the nation?"[1] In an almost prophetic tone he exclaims: "Let us rejoice in the prospect of the time when the day of redemption will dawn for the fair sex, when human beings, who are called to equal rights, will not be hindered in the enjoyment of them, and when those who, to all appearances, are equal will not be separated by arbitrary distinctions."[2]

Was this an echo of the strong, full note, struck by Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman?* Perhaps it was. An hypothesis to that effect is supported by much indirect evidence, and leads to the assumption, that Mary Wollstonecraft, through Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, announced in Germany the principles which must ultimately lead to the emancipation of woman.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 209. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

CONCLUSION.

A CENTURY has passed since Mary Wollstonecraft made her demands in behalf of women. The principles which served as foundation of her argument, have become the watchword of progress in the onward course of civilization. The contest concerning the abolition of slavery, waged during the first part of the present century, was an application of some of the ideas which were so strongly enunciated during the French Revolution. In our own day the discussion of the social problem centers largely in the persistent effort to secure to the laborer the rights of man. The influence of these movements could not but leave upon women the impression, that the day of their emancipation had also drawn nigh. If any one of them demanded for herself that which she considered the rights of a human being, the general ideas of the present century furnished her an ally, sufficiently strong to render the prospect of success at least to some extent hopeful.

A comparison between the propositions and demands of Mary Wollstonecraft and that which has been achieved in their realization gives evidence of a marked change in the whole situation. Few of the women of her times were conscious of a desire for equality, and men did not seek occasion to arouse aspirations of this kind. This apathy has given way to unrest. Of the nations which can to-day lay even the slightest claim to civilization, there are few that do not count within their borders women, who are conscious of the degrading nature of their subordinate position. To win for herself the rights to which she has claim as a human being, is the aim of the typical woman of the present century; and she works toward its attainment with a patient determination. Man is not by any means always her enemy, who enjoys for himself the high heritage of the rights of freedom and equality, the trophies of the struggle of past centuries, and refuses to allow woman to partake of them. There are men, who lend a hand to remove obstacles that obstruct the path which Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the first to tread; men like John Stuart Mill, who in his widely read book, *The Subjection of Women*, proved himself one of the numerous advisers and helpers of woman, who during the present century have ranged themselves on her side.

Others, however, stand afar off and watch this new current in the history of civilization with doubtful mien; strange it seems to them and uncertain as to its ultimate destiny. But when this question in modern progress embodies itself in the

form of a member of her sex, who asks of life but the right of freedom in the choice of her calling, in the preparation for it and in its pursuit, then the question takes a turn, it becomes direct and practical, and any possible opposition falls to the ground by reason of its innate contradiction. The days have passed, when one human being could dictate to another: Thy rank in society, or in this case thy sex, robs thee of the opportunity of striving after the attainment of the highest possible degree of development of all thy faculties. Such disposition of one by another belongs to the time when serfdom was still in vogue, not to our own day.

The course of history remains a closed book to many, who yet in their own circle of observation meet with the unmistakable fact, that a revolution is gaining ground, to some degree unobserved, but none the less surely and steadily. It is not noticed until daughter, sister or friend comes to a realization of the fact, that she is first a human being and then a woman, that she may partake of the rights of human beings and yet remain a woman.

In contrast to the apathy, which paralyzed progress in this direction in Mary Wollstonecraft's time, we have to-day the lively opposition of conservative minds among women as well as men. This is a favorable sign, indicating that public opinion is now at work on a question, which in that day seemed peculiar and out of place. The man of meager education, as well as the man of learning, forms

an opinion concerning the position, which nature has given to woman. A corresponding profusion of literary productions marks the degree to which the public mind has taken hold of the question. Frivolous witticism, sentimental declamation and the sameness of oft repeated assertions form a wearisome phase of this literature. The case is different, when the scientist forms hypotheses to prove that woman, according to the physical necessity of her nature, must be excluded from the higher range of mental activity. These assumptions have been proven unsound and have thus supported by indirect proof the positive side of the argument in favor of equality. The psychologist too has instituted researches, investigating the powers and functions of the female mind. His results are of doubtful value, for as John Stuart Mill says, this chapter of psychology will not stand on correct basis until the time comes, when women shall be of age and able to give information concerning themselves. In this respect also, Mary Wollstonecraft did the service of a pioneer, in saying: "I have, probably, had an opportunity of observing more girls in their infancy than J. J. Rousseau and I recollect my own feelings."[1] The student of political economy too finds that he is lacking in a fixed foundation, when he attempts to assign to woman her place in the vast organism that constitutes the state. It may easily happen, that that which he seeks to support theoretically to-day, is practically proven untenable to-morrow

[1] A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, p. 81.

by woman, as she, undaunted, moves onward in the path which her feet are treading.

The limited number of professions and occupations, which Mary Wollstonecraft hesitatingly mentioned as adapted to women, have multiplied. She bravely pointed to the study and practice of medicine as a calling which woman could follow, much to the advantage of the suffering, especially among her own sex. Seventy-five years after her time, the Universities of Switzerland admitted women to academic rights and honors. Some of Mary Wollstonecraft's countrywomen, in those early days of scant educational advantages, sojourned in Switzerland, because the doors of English Colleges were yet closed against them. The day came, when on British soil their rights were to some extent respected. There has been a steady increase from year to year in the branches of employment in which women gain a foothold, until to-day there are few in which they have not at least reached an average degree of ability and efficiency. The question is no longer as to whether woman is able, the question is, what effect will the addition of so much fresh capacity of labor have upon social conditions? Will the strain grow more oppressive and the struggle for existence keener? But to set aside the capabilities of the woman, who stands above the average, in favor of the man of slight natural endowment, would be to give the victory to the physically stronger. It would be equivalent to following motives, which belong to the maxims of barbarism, where the physically strong takes in all

things the precedent, and contrary to the principles of equality, which the race has evolved at tremendous cost.

Those causes and effects of woman's subordinate position, which Mary Wollstonecraft laid bare with so much penetration, are still in operation to some degree. In their full extent as defect, as blemish, they appear when they produce discords where otherwise there would be naught but full-toned harmony of development. The dormant condition of important faculties, barely noticed in the seclusion of private life, makes itself felt, when the activities are transferred to positions of wider responsibilities in public life.

Mary Wollstonecraft complained that the women of her times possessed so little genuine love for humanity, that they seldom felt any tenderness toward children, who were not their own. In this direction a change has been wrought. Philanthropic interests have opened out to women channels of activity, which have led them to new conceptions concerning the claims which the individual has upon the race, and reciprocally the race on the individual ; and these new conceptions have re-acted upon them, and lent them a new dignity. The motives toward this activity have undoubtedly been furnished by the religion of Jesus Christ. If in facing the stronghold of conservatism, there was danger that woman might lay too great a stress upon her rights, the balance was restored by the precepts of Christianity, which give to duty the first place, and accord to right the place of a

legitimate second. When the weak face the strong, they speak of their rights. The time must come when woman may cease to declare her independence and remember only that human beings are inter-dependent, and may limit their liberty even unto the sacrifice of their lives, if they would aspire to the highest ideals of the Christian world.

It is wholly in accordance with a sound, normal growth, that woman should but slowly gather into her hand some of the threads of public life, and that her influence should but by degrees become a part of the conflicting currents of contemporaneous thought. By means of cunning and intrigue the women of Mary Wollstonecraft's day wrought much both of good and of evil in the destinies of nations. Stealthy interference may even to-day have its far reaching effects. At the same time, in a frank and open spirit, woman, to a degree that varies in different nations, is beginning to take part in the duties of public life, not asserting herself obtrusively, but with a view to conquering rather by means of the fairness and justice of her cause. For who shall chide her, when she ranges herself on the side of those of her own sex who, poor, destitute, outcast or imprisoned are dependent upon the mercy or justice of the state? Who would interfere, when she seeks to weaken the stability of laws, that were made to support man's sovereignty in the family, that rank woman in a line with his goods and possessions?

Woman is comparatively powerless so long as she is denied the franchise. John Stuart Mill

directs his argument largely towards this aspect of the matter; for in the problem of enfranchisement the whole question of the social position of woman comes to a point. The laughter, with which, as Mary Wollstonecraft rightly expected, her proposition that women should have their own representatives was received, has long since been turned into soberness. Political conflicts and earnest debates have, in several countries, shown that that which in her day was termed an Utopian dream, cannot now be hushed to silence by jokes and innuendoes. Those who maintain the political equality of woman scarcely find themselves under necessity to fortify their position by means of argument. All that could be said for or against was exhausted in other directions. Especially since the time when in America political equality was thrust upon the slave, but recently liberated, as a gift, there is no argument left, that could make it appear in the light of justice and fairness, that woman should be denied that which was given to the slave unasked. All that now remains to be conquered is a certain sentiment. An inveterate antipathy furnishes the last arrow remaining in a once well-filled quiver.

If this antipathy is defined, it is generally found to have its source in the desire to shield the family and the home. In an undefinable fear of that which is new and unknown to experience, fancy creates terrifying pictures of how the state, which must not be deprived of the family as its foundation, how the whole commonwealth would be plunged into dire confusion, if ever the narrow boundaries which now

confine women to the family, and the family only, should yield to pressure. But experience, the faithful adviser of fancy, has already demonstrated, that the states which have extended the franchise to women and have made her free economically, have suffered no manner of catastrophe, nor have they found themselves involved in a confusion of social conditions. In its early days the movement was not without its fanatics, the necessary accompaniment of any great movement. They undoubtedly had a work to do; they did it heroically, though perhaps not always gracefully, and have passed away. To-day the "New Woman" illustrates another phase in the evolution of the movement. She is the woman who has an undisputed right to all things, who would be guarded in that which she appropriates, but is often crude and self-assertive in her choice. She carries her new-found freedom with a proud air of inelegancy. As for the true "New Woman" of the future, who shall define her? There are to-day women, who in their personality herald the coming of a new woman who will be the fulfilment of the ideals, thought unattainable by her who passed through the shadows of the transition state from the old to the new.

The fear that woman could be estranged from the family need have no power to harass. She will never cease instinctively to expect happiness of a high order in the companionship of her husband, in the clinging helplessness of her little children. Her expectation that her husband will regard her as an equal can only tend to lift family relations to

a higher, nobler plane. If, as John Stuart Mill says, the family is to-day the only social institution in which despotism may lift its head unrebuked and unpunished, it would be a consequential completion of the revolutions inaugurated by the eighteenth century, if woman should banish from society this remnant of barbarism.

Mary Wollstonecraft's hints concerning a reconciliation between the conflicting claims of professional life and the home, between independence and the family, are few. How both could be blended in harmonious development, neither detracting from the other, but rather each supplementing the other, she did not and could not explain. Down to the present day theories on this subject are of merely potential value. Experience must demonstrate that a reconciliation between these conflicting factors in the modern woman's life, is not only within the range of possibility, but that it is an actually accomplished fact. Every woman who engages in this conflict and in a conciliatory spirit goes forth from it as conqueror, supports from the practical side a movement, which to her individually is a source of power. This represents the individual, practical aspect of the movement. Its general aspect, in its conformity to a general law, is to be found in the course of history.

It is the significance of the work of Mary Wollstonecraft, as vindicator of the rights of woman, that with the eye of genius she recognized the advent of the time, when in the course of historical development, the principles had been evolved, which

would offer to each individual woman a sure foothold for her endeavors in the direction of emancipation. To this conception she gave perhaps the first conscious expression and thereby became the forerunner of a movement, which seems destined to revolutionize social conditions in many countries. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* may therefore be considered to have marked an epoch in the history of civilization.

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